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LOYALTIES
MESOPOTAMIA
1914–1917

FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR
TO THE
DEATH OF GENERAL MAUDE

By the same Author

THE PERSIAN GULF
An historical sketch from the earliest times to the beginning of the twentieth century. 1928

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PERSIA. 1930

The Clarendon Press, Oxford

LOYALTIES
MESOPOTAMIA
1914—1917

A Personal and Historical Record

BY

LT.-COL. SIR ARNOLD T. WILSON
K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O.
Formerly Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and His Majesty's Consul-General for Fars, Khuzistan, &c.

> si quid tamen olim
> scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis aures
> et patris et nostras, nonumque prematur in annum,
> membranis intus positis: delere licebit
> quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti.
>
> HORACE. *Ars Poetica*

> Suppose some day
> You should take courage and compose a lay,
> Entrust it first to Maecius' critic ears,
> Your sire's and mine, and keep it back nine years.
> What's kept at home you cancel by a stroke:
> What's sent abroad you never can revoke.
>
> CONINGTON

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THE BAND IN THE PINES

(AFTER PELHAM DIED)[1]

OH, band in the pine-wood, cease!
Cease with your splendid call;
The living are brave and noble,
But the dead were bravest of all!

They throng in the martial summons,
The loud triumphant strain,
And the dear bright eyes of long-dead friends
Come to the heart again!

They come with the ringing bugle,
And the deep drum's mellow roar;
Till the soul is faint with longing
For the hands we clasp no more!

Oh, band in the pine-wood, cease!
Or the heart will melt in tears,
For the gallant eyes and the smiling lips,
And the voices of old years.

JOHN ESTEN COOKE (1830–1886)
Southern War Songs

---

[1] This doubtless refers to a Major Pelham of Stuart's command in the American Civil War, who won the admiration of Generals Lee and Jackson; the latter wrote to Stuart: 'Have you another Pelham, General? If so, I wish you would give him to me.' This was in 1863. The above poem was first printed in the *Southern Illustrated News*.

QUORUM NOMINA INFRA LEGUNTUR
CUM SIVE IN BELLO SIVE IN CONSILIO
PRAECLARE ALACRES
VITAE PRODIGI PATRIAE PROFUISSENT
INTER PAUCOS ANNOS
E MEDIIS LABORIBUS ANTE DIEM PRAEREPTI
NUNC APUD AMICOS DESIDERANTES
MORTUI VIVUNT.
AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM
ET IN EORUM MEMORIAM
HUNC LIBELLUM SCRIPSIT
COLLEGA ET AMICUS
A. T. W.
ANNO DOM. MCMXXX.

Ὦ ξεῖν , ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε
κείμεθα, τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.
SIMONIDES OF CEOS.

Stranger! to Sparta say, her faithful band
Here lie in death, remembering her command.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS AND

Abbreviations: (B.S.) British Service; (I.A.) Indian Army; (I.P.) Indian Police; (I.C.S.) Indian Civil Service; U.K. United Kingdom.

	1914	
Captain R. L. Birdwood. (I.A.)	17th November.	Killed in action at Sahil *(b)*.
	1915	
Captain W. H. I. Shakespear. (I.A.)	24th January.	Killed in action in Central Arabia *(l)*.
Captain F. L. Dyer. (I.A.)	15th April.	Killed by Arabs near Darra Khazina (Arabistan) whilst attached to Anglo-Persian Oil Co. Ltd. *(e)*.
Captain J. G. L. Ranking. (I.A.)	12th July.	Killed by Tangistani tribesmen on Bushire Island near Sabzabad *(j)*.
	1916	
Captain H. St. G. F. Pulford. (I.A.)	28th June.	Died of cholera *(b)*.
Captain E. R. MacRae. (I.P.)	2nd July.	Died of cholera *(b)*.
	1917	
Captain L. P. Gagliardi. (I.P.)	5th September.	Accidentally drowned whilst on duty at ʿAmara *(c)*.
D. G. McLeod. (India Customs.)	26th September.	Died of pneumonia at Basra *(b)*.
Lieutenant O. Wright. (B.S.)	13th October.	Accidentally killed whilst on leave at Naini Tal, India *(i)*.
	1918	
Captain W. M. Marshall. (I.A.)	19th March.	Killed by Arabs at Najaf *(a)*.
Captain J. D. Prothero. (I.A.)	11th August.	Died of cholera *(g)*.
Captain G. Finch. (R.A.M.C.) (T.F.)	8th October.	Died of influenza and pneumonia *(b)*.
Lieutenant E. A. W. Hawke. (B.S.)	27th December.	Accidentally killed whilst on leave. (U.K.)
	1919	
Captain A. C. Pearson. (I.A.)	4th April.	Killed by Kurds *(a)* *(m)*.
Captain L. S. L. Dacres. (I.C.S.)	20th April.	Died of typhus contracted at Najaf *(a)*.
Lance-Corporal A. Methuen. (B.S.)	10th July.	Killed by Kurds *(a)* *(m)*.
Captain D. Willey. (B.S.)	14th July.	Killed at ʿAmadia by Kurds *(k)* *(m)*.

Captain H. Macdonald, M.C. (B.S.)	14th July.	Killed at ʻAmadia by Kurds (*k*) (*m*).
Sapper R. Troup. (B.S.)	14th July.	Killed at ʻAmadia by Kurds (*k*) (*m*).
J. H. Bill. (I.C.S.)	2nd November.	Killed near Bira Kapra by Kurds (*a*) (*m*).
Captain K. R. Scott, M.C. (I.A.)	2nd November.	Killed near Bira Kapra by Kurds (*a*) (*m*).
Captain F. R. Walker, M.B.E. (I.A.)	26th November.	Died at Mosul of pneumonia (*a*) (*m*).
Captain C. E. Berey. (I.A.)	10th December.	Accidentally killed (*a*).
	1920	
Major J. E. Barlow, D.S.O. (B.S.)	3rd June.	Killed at Tal ʻAfar by Arabs (*a*) (*m*).
Lieutenant B. Stuart. (B.S.)	3rd June	Killed at Tal ʻAfar by Arabs (*a*) (*m*).
Sergeant A. Walker. (B.S.)	3rd June.	Killed at Tal ʻAfar by Arabs (*a*) (*m*).
Pte. W. Lawlor. (B.S.)	3rd June.	Killed at Tal ʻAfar by Arabs (*a*) (*m*).
Captain H. O. Newland. (B.S.)	28th June.	Died of disease (*a*).
Captain M. Priestly-Evans. (I.A.)	10th July.	Killed in action (*a*).
Captain J. S. Mann (B.S.)	22nd July	Killed at Kufa by Arabs (*a*).
Captain R. C. Geard. (I.A.)	27th July.	Killed near Tabriz by Shahsavan bandits (*f*).
Lt.-Col. G. E. Leachman, C.I.E., D.S.O. (B.S.)	14th August.	Killed by Arabs at Khan Nuqtaʻ (*a*).
Captain D. P. O'Brien. (I.A.)	8th August.	Died of disease (*a*).
H. T. Sprott. (Harbour-Master.)	4th August.	Died of disease (*h*).
Captain W. T. Wrigley, M.C. (B.S.)	13th August.	Killed at Shahraban by Arabs (*a*).
Captain J. T. Bradfield. (B.S.)	13th August.	do.
Captain E. L. Buchanan. (late R.A.F.)	13th August.	do.
Sergt. N. L. Nisbett. (B.S.)	13th August.	do.
Sgt.-Maj. W. Newton. (B.S.)	13th August.	do.
Captain H. Salmon. (B.S.)	28th August.	Killed at Kifri by Arabs (*a*).
Captain A. H. R. Bevan. (I.A.)	30th December.	Accidentally killed at Port Said (*d*).

PLACES OF BURIAL AS RECORDED BY IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

(*a*) Baghdad (N. Gate) War Cemetery.
(*b*) Basra War Cemetery.
(*c*) ‘Amara War Cemetery.
(*d*) Port Said War Memorial Cemetery.
(*e*) Chashmeh-i-Zuliak, Masjid-i-Sulaiman, Persia.
(*f*) American Mission Cemetery, Tabriz.
(*g*) Military Cemetery, Hamadan, Persia.
(*h*) Cemetery at Abadan.
(*i*) Kala Khan Cemetery, Naini Tal, India.
(*j*) Indo-European Telegraph Dept. Cemetery at Reshire, Bushire, Persia.

MEMORIALS WHERE NAMES RECORDED, PLACE OF BURIAL BEING UNKNOWN

(*k*) Basra Memorial.
(*l*) Aden Memorial.
(*m*) Commemorated on a marble tablet placed by A. T. W. in French Dominican Church at Mosul.

And so sepúlchered, in such pomp dost lie
That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die.

PREFACE

'Lord Grey of Fallodon has laid down the principle that it is of vital importance for the world that the causes which led to the Great War should be examined minutely in the light of the fullest knowledge obtainable: he holds that it is therefore essential that adequate knowledge of political and diplomatic events in the period before the war should be made available. This doctrine has received general approval; willing, and in some cases self-immolating collaborators have come forward in many countries which participated in the war and have, by the publicity of memoirs, histories and other compilations of unprecedented frankness, supplied, in a brief period after the event occurred, an abundant amount of detail for the guidance or confusion of future historians.

'If this rapid publicity offends against old canons of taste . . . it is beneficial to the cause of peace. . . . The more rapidly follies and misdeeds become known the less the temptation to commit them.'

LORD D'ABERNON, *An Ambassador of Peace*, 1929.

IT is just sixteen years since our forces, under the cover of the guns of the Royal Navy, landed at Fao, and twelve years have passed since the signature by the Turks of the Armistice agreement of Mudros Bay. The public memory is short, and the recollections of many of those who played a leading part between 1914 and 1920 in the Mesopotamian drama are growing dim. None of the principal actors, with the exception of the late Sir C. Townshend and Sir Aylmer Haldane, has unfolded his story, though Sir William Marshall, Sir George MacMunn, and Sir George Younghusband have in their published recollections thrown some light upon the events which they themselves did so much to mould. In comparison with the voluminous literature dealing with other fronts, little has been published on the subject of the campaign in Turkish Arabia, though, whether measured by the number of troops engaged, the casualties sustained, the cost, the distance from England, or the area covered, it must rank as the greatest military operation ever undertaken by Great Britain, with the single exception of the British Expeditionary Force in France, and, in point of casualties only, the Dardanelles campaign. The military operations in this theatre of war up to the date of the Armistice have been discreetly described by the official historian, Brig.-Gen. Moberly, in four closely packed and finely written volumes, but the limitations imposed on him by the nature of his office and by the character of the work have precluded him from dealing comprehensively with events in this region. He only refers incidentally to the growth behind and on the flanks of the army of a civil administration whose function it was, under the supreme control of successive Commanders-in-Chief, to renew the weft and warp of the life of the civil population; to provide an administration to take the place of the Turkish régime which we had destroyed; and, so far as in us lay, to make good by successive instalments the promises of liberty, justice, and prosperity so freely made to the Arab inhabitants at the very outset of the campaign. On this aspect of our stewardship in Mesopotamia, the *Review of the Civil Administration*, compiled under my instructions and supervision by the late Miss Gertrude Bell,[1] and laid before Parliament in 1920, is almost the only document published in England. Of her services I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Suffice it here to say that it is an enduring record both of her literary gifts and unwearying and selfless energy in the service of the countries of her birth and her adoption. To certain aspects of the military operations the late Mr. Edmund Candler[2] has done justice in the vivid and sometimes mordant prose of which he was master. Of the heroic efforts and tragic fate of the garrison of Kut-al-ʿAmara much has been written by men who were participants in and eye-witnesses of the dreadful events which they describe. Captain Hay has written of the post-Armistice period in North-East Kurdistan, and Captain Lyell of the Euphrates tribes and the idiosyncrasies of the populace of Najaf and Karbala, whilst the letters of the late Captain Mann remain as a vivid and enduring memorial of the spirit which animated the district officers of the Civil Administration in those days. In the delightful pages of *Haji Rikkan*, the joint authorship of which is veiled by the pseudonym 'Fulanain', there is a wealth of information regarding the life and psychology of the Arab of the marshes. But these works, and others of less importance, do not purport to deal with Mesopotamia as a whole, nor indeed were their authors in a position to do so.

On the other side, little has appeared. The fragmentary nature of the references in the German and Turkish literature to the Mesopotamia campaign reflects the natural reluctance of our former enemies to record the successive disasters to which they were subjected, culminating in the complete loss of the Arab provinces of the Turkish Empire, and the ruin of great and not unworthy German ambitions.

In my book *The Persian Gulf* I have attempted to place on record succinctly some account of the conditions in this part of the world from the earliest times till 1902. I may perhaps be able at some subsequent date to bridge the gap; for the present, the student of this period is invited to refer to the writings of Sir Percy Sykes and others, a list of which will be found in the Bibliography.

Ten years have passed since I left Mesopotamia; Sir Percy Cox and Sir Henry Dobbs have retired, and Sir Gilbert Clayton died in the harness of office in September 1929. In these circumstances, and in deference to the very numerous requests from former colleagues, I have felt justified in discharging what I feel to be a pious obligation to record the manner in which the trust imposed from the outset of the campaign on the Civil Administration was discharged. To do so without reference, step by step, to the progress of military operations, to which civil functions were at all times ancillary, would have involved the presentation of a picture so one-sided and incomplete as to be of little worth. Moreover, most of the responsible political officers played a part, often distinguished, in the military operations themselves. A score of lonely graves, and others the place whereof no man knoweth, testified at the end of 1920 to the interrelation in war as well as in peace, in death as well as in life, of the Civil Administration and the Army.

---

[1] She died at Baghdad on 12th July 1926.

[2] He died in January 1926.

It has not been possible without overloading the narrative with footnotes to cite chapter and verse for every statement made, but it has been my consistent endeavour to make no statement of fact without adequate evidence.

If by anything that I have written of the dead, I give pain to the living, I would ask them to remember, in the words of Voltaire, that 'on doit des égards aux vivants; on ne doit aux morts que la vérité.' To the memory of those who suffered and died needlessly in the torrid wastes of Mesopotamia the truth, so far as it may be known, is also due.

For the rest, I have sought, within the compass of a single work, written during the last twelve months and amongst many other preoccupations, to give to the reader a comprehensive view of the varied activities which combined to bring our operations in Mesopotamia to a successful conclusion. I have tried, too, to convey some idea of the sufferings and the courage of the rank and file. It is a tale of great deeds by land and river, sea and air, of suffering and endurance and of faithfulness unto death on both sides, in pursuit of objects dimly seen, and of aims but darkly understood. The numerous records of the campaign in Mesopotamia that have seen the light convey no adequate picture of the courage and perseverance of the brave and noble spirits, British and Indian, Arab, Persian, Turkish and African, on whom fell the agony of those unhappy days. Nor have the voluminous official publications of our time revealed a tithe of the technical skill and professional devotion of the thousands of men of every race and age, and of all walks of life, who devoted their whole energies not only to the prosecution of the war, but to the rehabilitation of a region that had been as surely devastated by the supine folly of its former rulers, as the stricken fields of Flanders by the colossal machinery of modern war. We, who know what those sufferings were and how great were those efforts, hope that what will strike our children, happy and unknowing, is not the glory of victory or of achievement, but the spirit in which it was sought. It has been my aim to record, however inadequately, something of that spirit and of the clash of loyalties which it entailed, though the memory of those days may make old wounds throb and bleed again.

I said in Baghdad in 1920 that I believed that we, and we alone, had it in our power to enable the peoples of the Middle East to attain a civic and cultural unity more beneficial and greater than any reached by the great Empires of their romantic past, a unity which might bring in its turn blessings to them and to the world which we can only dimly discern, for it is, in the ultimate resort, a necessary prelude to world security and world peace.

Since then successive British Governments have by treaty and otherwise voluntarily abandoned the means and destroyed the administrative machinery by which they might have helped the people of ʿIraq to accomplish such things, yet have done little to assist the various races which constitute the population of ʿIraq to live in harmony with their neighbours, much less 'to stand alone in the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. The future is thus uncertain, even dark, but with the future this work is not concerned.

I lost in ʿIraq many of my dearest friends. In their memory and in memory of the great company of 60,000 men who perished with them, I respectfully commend this book to the indulgence of the public.

A. T. WILSON.

November 1st, 1930.

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} *in pocket at end*

Note. All the above maps are reproduced, by permission of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office, whose courtesy in the matter is gratefully acknowledged, from those accompanying the *History of the Great War, based on Official Documents—Military Operations*, by Brig.-Gen. F. J. Moberly, see p. xxvi. That work contains numerous excellent maps illustrating successive phases of the war in 'Iraq which are indispensable to students of the military aspects of the campaign.

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PROLOGUE

(*See Map* 1.)

'Tout comprendre rend très indulgent'. MADAME DE STAËL, *Corinne*, BK. XVIII, CH. V

WHEN in July 1914 Reuter's Agency, harbinger of coming doom, spread the news of the crime of Sarajevo, the political horizon in the Middle East was less clouded than at any time during the previous five years.

In Persia the young Shah, Sultan Ahmad, whose coronation took place on 21st July, was reigning as a constitutional monarch in a country so long inured to civil disorder as to be little affected by its continuance. 'The rich', as the Persian saying goes, 'occupied themselves with their riches and the poor with their poverty.' Yet there were indications of a real improvement in the state of public order, and the Viceroy of India, when opening the Legislative Assembly in March, had publicly testified to the good work that was being done by the Persian gendarmerie under Swedish officers. The harvest had been good, the opium crop promised well, and there was, in addition, every prospect that within a few years very substantial profit would acrue to the country from the operations of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was already exporting oil at the rate of over a quarter of a million tons per annum.

On 10th August 1914, Royal Assent was given to the Act of Parliament which empowered the British Government to acquire a controlling interest in this Company. In the course of the debate on the subject in the House of Commons in June 1914, Mr. Winston Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, had in a prophetic moment declared[1] that the development of this field 'would make the Persian Government strong and the tribesmen tame'. 'How else', he asked, 'is the country to progress except by the development of its resources and the gradual civilization of distant provinces—at any rate, it is a perfectly healthy, legitimate and moral process.' The process to which he referred had already begun, and this corner of South-Western Persia was enjoying a peace to which its inhabitants had long been strangers.

In the Persian Gulf, too, profound peace reigned. An agreement had at last been concluded with the French Government, and the traffic in arms across the Gulf from Masqat had virtually come to an end. The Royal Navy was represented only by three sloops which kept a watchful eye over the Arab pearling fleet, scattered over the pearl-banks on a front of nearly a hundred miles, lest pirates should show their faces as in former days. Lighthouses and lighted buoys were in process of installation on certain islands and at convenient ports for the greater safety of shipping. Wireless installations had just been completed at Bahrain and Bushire for the benefit of the merchant marine and of traders. The Chiefs of the Arab principalities on the coast between Masandam and Bahrain were at peace with their subjects and with the world. The Shaikh of Kuwait, the aged Mubarak ibn Sabah, perhaps the finest Arab of his generation, could view the immediate future with complacency. His *de facto* position as an autonomous chief had virtually been accepted by the Sublime Porte in the course of Anglo-Turkish negotiations regarding the Baghdad Railway, and he could watch with satisfaction the steady growth of the influence in Central Arabia of his friend Ibn Saʿud of Riyadh who, when the stars in their courses were fighting against him in earlier days, had turned, not in vain, to Kuwait for assistance against his rival Ibn Rashid of Haïl.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 17.6.14.

Only in the oasis of Hasa, separated from the Persian Gulf by a broad strip of waterless desert, was active trouble afoot. Ibn Saʿud had followed with some apprehension the course of Anglo-Turkish negotiations to which he was in no sense a party; he knew that the British Government would be unable to procure the removal of Turkish detachments from the coastal ports of Najd, and he foresaw that the Turks were likely to bring pressure to bear on him ere long to accept Turkish officials in Hasa and even Riyadh. He acted swiftly, disarming and ejecting the Turkish garrisons, and announcing that the province of Najd would in future be autonomous under the shadowy suzerainty of the Porte.

In Turkish Arabia (as the provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul were called until 1916 in British official circles) tribal disorder was perhaps more widespread than usual, but it had little political significance and was confined to the Euphrates and Tigris south of Baghdad. The peasants tilled their fields and the nomads tended their flocks as their forefathers had done for two hundred generations, and paid little heed to the changing forms of secular government at Constantinople.

> Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep
> Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

But the peace that reigned was static, not dynamic; Mesopotamia was in a state of political stagnation and economic decay. The widespread tribal disorders were the blind protests of ignorant men who desired better things which they knew not how to attain.

The Young Turks were indeed active in Basra, and the ambitions of local leaders of rival parties had caused some embarrassment to the Government; but the Turkish Government was little perturbed thereby, for Hakki Pasha had just initialled, jointly with Sir Edward Grey, a series of Conventions, laboriously negotiated during the previous three years, covering practically every outstanding political question of importance. The long-standing dispute regarding the Eastern terminus of the Baghdad Railway was in process of solution; a draft Convention for the regulation of the navigation of the Shatt-al-ʿArab had been accepted in principle by the parties principally concerned; the demarcation of the Turco-Persian frontier was almost complete, thus ending a frontier dispute that had lasted for nearly three hundred years. The navigation of the Tigris and Euphrates, the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, and a host of other problems were about to be settled amicably with the British Government, which was in simultaneous negotiation with the German Government.[1] Though the agreements had not actually been signed, they had for the most part been initialled, and a reference to its impending conclusion had found a place in the King's Speech on the State opening of Parliament on 10th February. In a few years' time Constantinople would be linked by rail with Basra, and the authority of the Sublime Porte would become a reality in regions where it had hitherto been an administrative fiction.

When the little war-cloud, 'like a man's hand', first arose in the west, it is safe to say that it occurred to no one in Turkish Arabia that it would overshadow them within a few months, bringing terror and doom to pygmy man. None could have imagined that within six years nearly thirty thousand British and Indian soldiers and an equal number of Turks and Arabs would perish in the flower of their youth in the country of the two rivers and the rocky wastes of Kurdistan. Still less could it be foreseen that Mars, god of war, would, like blind Samson, bring down the pillars of every eastern State, crushing in the fall thereof not only himself, but countless thousands of human beings, gentle and simple, and that from the blood-stained ruin there would rise new ideas, and new States, whose destinies would be controlled by men, with the exception of Ibn Saʿud, then wholly unknown to fame. This, and much more, was mercifully hidden from mortal ken.

Why and how the Turks were induced to enter the lists against the Allied Powers has been fully recounted elsewhere,[2] and to tell the tale afresh is beyond the scope of this work, which is concerned primarily with the progress of events in Mesopotamia from the moment that war broke out between Great Britain and Turkey.

On 2nd August, according to Djemal Pasha, a Turco-German alliance was signed, but the Turks decided to take no part in the war until their mobilization was complete. On 4th August Herr von Jagow telegraphed from Berlin to Constantinople: 'England will possibly declare war on us to-day or to-morrow. In order to prevent the Porte breaking away from us at the last moment under the impression of the English action, the declaration of war by Turkey on Russia, if possible to-day, appears of the greatest importance.'

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[1] See Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War.*

[2] Valuable additional information on the subject is to be found in Viscount D'Abernon's *Diary*, vol. i.

The consular outposts of the British Government in the Middle East were alert. Major N. E. H. Scott of the Indian Medical Service was officiating Consul-General at Baghdad; at Basra was R. W. Bullard; at Mohammerah Major A. P. Trevor; at Isfahan (from Ahwaz) Captain J. G. L. Ranking, and at Kirmanshah the aged Mr. William MacDouall.[1] Scott wired on 11th August that the population of Baghdad, exasperated by the proclamation of martial law, and the forcible conscription of men, goods, and animals, might give serious trouble under the influence of anti-British agitation. 'The situation', he added, 'appears to responsible residents as having more serious possibilities than any former one within their recollection.' Bullard reported from Basra the existence of strong anti-Russian and anti-British feeling, sedulously fostered by official agencies. All local supplies of coal had been seized and navigation on the Tigris stopped. Turkish emissaries had been dispatched to India to fan the latent Islamic loyalties of Indian Muslims. A week later preparations were being made by the crew of the Hamburg-American steamer *Ekbatana* at Basra to block the river.

British ships now ceased to enter the Shatt-al-'Arab, thus depriving the landowners of Basra of a market for their dates, which were ready packed for export. Turkish troops began to arrive, destined, it was said, for Kuwait. It seemed clear that Turkey would before long declare war; it was equally clear that we could not afford to defer action against her in this region till a later stage in the war.

> 'The political effect', wrote Sir Arthur Hirtzel, then Political Secretary at the India Office, 'in the Persian Gulf and in India of leaving the head of the Gulf derelict, will be disastrous, and we cannot afford, politically, to acquiesce in such a thing for an indefinite period while the main issues are being settled elsewhere. From the military point of view a Turkish diversion in that region is doubtless negligible,—though under German officers it may not be wholly ineffective; but it will be worked for all it is worth for the sake of the political effect which the Turks and Germans hope to produce through it on Muslim feeling in India. . . . We cannot begin by sacrificing the Shaikh of Kuwait'

The subsequent discussions, which continued through September and October, are fully described in the *Official History*. The British Cabinet was reluctantly compelled to agree to the dispatch of an expeditionary force to the Persian Gulf. It would have been dispatched to Abadan in September but for the protests of the Government of India, who particularly desired that Indian Muslims should have no grounds for supposing that we had aggressive intentions towards Turkey. Subsequent events in India soon showed how ill-founded were their fears. During the last week in October, guns were posted on the banks of the Shatt-al-ʿArab by the Turks, and more mines laid, whilst troops passed unceasingly down the Tigris. On 29th October the British Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Louis Mallet, reported a great struggle in progress at Constantinople between the war party and the moderates, but expressed the hope that everything was not yet lost. On the same day the German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau* bombarded several Russian ports. On the 30th the British, French, and Russian Ambassadors demanded their passports. On the 31st October the Admiralty and India Office issued their 'war' telegrams; Russia declared war on Turkey on 2nd November, and on 5th November her example was followed by Great Britain and France. One of the greatest of Asiatic military powers, supported by the might of the greatest of the military nations of Europe, had challenged the British Empire to mortal combat in the legendary Garden of Eden. Upon the Turks, during the next few years, was pronounced the doom of Adam: they were sent forth to the place from whence they came, and 'the flaming sword which turned every way' of the British Army henceforward stood between them and the fertile lands which they had so long misgoverned.

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[1] He died at Khanaqin on Nov. 2nd, 1924, see *J.R.A.S.* Jan. 1925.

CHAPTER I[1]

THE OCCUPATION OF BASRA

> 'It would be useless to commence military operations upon any great scale, unless the civil officers should be prepared to take possession of the country, and to re-establish the civil government as the troops shall conquer it. If the civil government were not re-established in this manner, the rebels would rise again as soon as the troops would pass through the districts. . . . But if the civil government is to be re-established in this manner, it would be better to establish that system which is found to be good, and is to be permanent, than that which is known to be bad, and which it is intended should not last.' DUKE OF WELLINGTON, 20*th March* 1804.

Declaration of War. H.M.S. Espiègle *in Shatt-al-ʿArab. General Delamain's orders. I.E.F. 'D' at Bahrain. General Barrett enters Basra. Beginnings of Civil Administration. Military Governor appointed. Police Force started. Billeting difficulties. Veterinary precautions. Occupation of Qurna. Future of Mesopotamia discussed. Saiyid Talib. ʿAjaimi Pasha. Shaikh Ibrahim. Shaikh Uqbashi. Haji Adhar.*

IT became clear during September 1914 that the Turkish Government would before long enter the lists against the Allies; the Dardanelles were closed on the 27th, and on the same day the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf received from Ibn Saʿud copies of telegrams that had reached him from Enver Pasha[2] warning him of the dispatch of arms and ammunition and of officers for training his Arabs, with a view to a local offensive which could only be directed against the British or those in treaty relations with the British. From Basra we learned that the Wali had been informed that Turkey was about to enter the war on the side of Germany, and that German officers were on their way to Baghdad.

It was, however, from Isfahan that the most circumstantial reports emanated; as early as the second week in August the possibility of an attack on Abadan by the Turks was being discussed. A Turkish mission to Afghanistan was already there, on its way to Kabul via Kirman, and Captain Ranking, the British Vice-Consul for ʿArabistan, then in Isfahan, telegraphed to Bushire recommending the dispatch of a gunboat to the Shatt-al-ʿArab, which Major Trevor,[3] the British Consul at Mohammerah, had already demanded.

On the 29th September, H.M.S. *Espiègle* arrived in the Shatt-al-ʿArab and anchored off Mohammerah, whilst H.M.S. *Odin* left the

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[1] References: *Official History, Critical Study, Naval Review.*

[2] See D'Abernon, vol. i, for a useful summary of Enver Pasha's career.

[3] He died in April 1930.

Photo by Swaine

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR W. S. DELAMAIN
K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
Indian Army

river and anchored on the bar. At Abadan lay H.M.S. *Dalhousie* (an armed ship taken over from the Royal Indian Marine and manned by that Service).

Objection was taken to their presence on 4th October by the Wali on the ground that they were within Turkish territorial waters. On 7th October a formal letter, in Turkish and English, was delivered on board the *Espiègle* by a Turkish naval officer. After explaining that the whole of the Shatt-al-'Arab belonged to Turkey and therefore no warships belonging to the belligerents could enter, it ended up with the sentence: 'Please you leave the Shat before 24 hours.'[1] A reply in writing was given that the *Espiègle* could not leave without instructions from the Admiralty. Whether the Turkish contention was tenable in international law would have been an interesting proposition for leisurely discussion by a panel of foreign jurists, for though the Shatt-al-'Arab was formally recognized to be part of Turkey, Turkish rights thereon were not unlimited: Persian vessels had by treaty the right to navigate the Shatt-al-'Arab 'in full liberty from the place where it flows into the sea, as far as the point of junction of the frontiers of the two parties, namely, some five miles above Mohammerah'. Moreover, the Turkish Government had, during 1912–13, recognized in the course of current negotiations with Great Britain that the Shatt-al-'Arab should 'remain open to the ships of all nations'. It was, however, not the moment for legal disputation on this plane of argument, and the *Espiègle* was instructed to proceed for half a mile up the Karun, where she would be indisputably within Persian territorial waters, whilst the *Dalhousie* went to the bar, to keep watch lest the *Emden* should unexpectedly appear: here she remained till the 26th, when she went to Bushire to facilitate wireless communication with H.M.'s ships and transports. On 13th October the Wali of Basra notified the British Consul that the *Espiègle* should leave the Shatt-al-'Arab within eight days; any attempt to pass after that date would be resisted by force of arms. The Turks now began to fortify the river bank; guns were mounted opposite Mohammerah, and reinforcements of troops began to pass down stream. On 20th October the Wali of Basra proposed[2] to the Shaikh of Mohammerah that he should allow a large body of Turkish troops in disguise to be put on the housetops on each side of the Kaṛun river, where the *Espiègle* was lying; it being arranged that the two guns on the island of Dabba or Umm-ar-Rasas would open fire on the *Espiègle*, and when she returned the fire, the force on the housetops should open fire 'especially at the gunners—thus', it proceeded, 'there will be an unexpected slaughter. When no one can defend the gunboat they will board it, killing every one they can find and seizing the gunboat.' It was further pointed out that this was 'an excellent opportunity for the Shaikh of Mohammerah to perform a valuable service to the Turkish Government'. Needless to say the Shaikh would have nothing to do with the scheme.

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[1] *Naval Review*, iii, p. 488.

[2] A copy of this paper was captured, with the Wali of Basra, at Qurna.

At midnight on 31st October, the Commander of the *Espiègle* received a telegram announcing that hostilities with Turkey had broken out; he was instructed to protect British interests and property at Mohammerah and Abadan, and to reassure the Shaikh of Mohammerah as to our proceedings. On the night of 2nd November, the *Espiègle* dropped quietly down stream, stern first, with the ebb tide, passing unnoticed within three hundred yards of the battery; the Commander cast anchor at Saihan, a few miles above Abadan, and sent a landing party on shore to cut the telegraph wire between Fao and Basra. It was repaired, and again cut. On 6th November she moved down to protect Abadan. She came under heavy rifle fire at noon from the bank opposite, but was able to silence it within two hours by rifle and gun fire.

Whilst the *Espiègle* was thus skilfully engaged in playing hide-and-seek with the Turks on the Shatt-al-ʿArab, the British Government, in communication with the Government of India, was making preparations to deal with the situation which must arise at the head of the Gulf in the event of war with Turkey. On 16th October 1914, the first Brigade of Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' sailed under sealed orders from Bombay: the quantity of rations taken on board and the type of ship taken up were known to many, who deduced therefrom, a fortnight before the departure of the force, that Basra was its destination. Brigadier-General Delamain of the Indian Army was in command; he had with him, as Chief Political Officer, Sir Percy Cox, who had since the beginning of the year been Foreign Secretary to the Government of India and was thus in the closest possible touch with the authorities in Whitehall and in Simla. Of his thirty years' service he had spent six with the Army in India, four as a Political Officer in the State of Baroda, six on the Somali Coast, and the remainder in the Persian Gulf, where from 1904 to the end of 1913 he had been Political Resident and Consul-General.

Brig.-Gen. Delamain's instructions were to occupy Abadan Island in order to

(1) protect the oil refineries, tanks, and pipe-lines;
(2) cover the landing of reinforcements;
(3) assure the local Arabs of our support against Turkey.

He was to avoid hostilities with Turkey or with the Arabs, and in order to give no handle to the Turks, was to use the Bahmishir channel, if possible—a quite impracticable suggestion, which reveals doleful ignorance in military circles of elementary geographical conditions.

The moral effect on the Arab chiefs at the head of the Gulf was, according to the India Office, to be the chief, and the protection of 'the oil stores' (*sic*) the secondary object to be attained. These orders were the result of conferences in Whitehall, and not of any initiative on the part of the Government of India, who recorded its opinion that the dispatch of a force in such circumstances was 'provocative'. They were clumsily worded, for troops in occupation of Abadan could not protect the pipe-line which ran for some 130 miles northwards through Ahwaz to the oil-fields at Masjid Sulaiman: still less could such a force exercise any influence on events in the oil-fields themselves, which were situated in country inhabited and, at that time, controlled not by Arab tribes but by virile Persian nomads. It is to be supposed that the Government of India relied on the passive support of the Arab tribes on both banks of the Shatt-al-ʻArab under the influence of the Shaikhs of Mohammerah and Kuwait, but on this subject General Delamain's instructions were silent.[1] He was, however, informed that the remainder of the 6th Division was in readiness to support him, and that in the event of hostilities with Turkey he was, if possible, to occupy Basra.

The Force anchored at Bahrain on 23rd October, and left its anchorage on the 29th: war with Turkey was formally declared on the 5th November, and, the bar having been cleared of mines, part of the 16th Infantry Brigade landed scatheless at Fao on the 6th under cover of the guns of H.M.S. *Odin*. Leaving a small garrison there, General Delamain re-embarked his troops and two days later, covered by H.M.S. *Espiègle*, made a second landing on the Turkish shore of the Shatt-al-ʻArab at Saniya, 2½ miles above Abadan.

It is legitimate to suggest that the naval sloops might have been used more boldly at this juncture; they could have steamed up to Basra at any time from the outbreak of hostilities and shelled the town; they could have escorted transports to a point above Basra and captured every Turk in the place. The operations were, however, marked by great caution, and very orthodox tactics; the Navy was not used as it might have been. It was assumed that the Turks were in a position to resist naval gunfire, and that the river was closed. Both assumptions were erroneous.

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[1] The Government of India, shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, conveyed through the Political Resident at Bushire to these Shaikhs a formal promise to the effect that, if they would undertake to use their best endeavours with their respective tribesmen in Turkish territory, the date-gardens owned by them on the Turkish bank should remain in their full possession and that of their heirs and immune from taxation. This promise, the real importance of which lies in its implications, was probably superfluous, for both chiefs at that time were convinced that H.M.'s Government was able and willing to give effect to its repeated and explicit assurances of protection from encroachment or aggression from whatsoever direction. Yet the risk, in the event of any failure on the part of the British Expeditionary Force, to these chiefs of incurring the resentment of the Turkish Government was very great. Had we failed, the confiscation of their valuable estates would have been the least of the penalties inflicted on them. The assistance rendered to the Force, especially by the Shaikh of Mohammerah, was of great military and political value.

On 11th November the Turks made a determined attack on General Delamain's force: they were repulsed: in this engagement the first British and Indian casualties in the campaign occurred.

On the 14th November, Lieut.-Gen. Sir Arthur Barrett, commanding the 6th Division, arrived with reinforcements. On the 15th, General Delamain's mixed force of British and Indian troops now under the orders of General Barrett, with two Indian Mountain Batteries, engaged and defeated the Turkish forces near Saihan. Two days later a further successful action was fought near Sahil, in the course of which Sir Percy Cox's Assistant, Capt. R. L. Birdwood, was killed, and our forces were massing for a fresh attack on the Turkish position at Baljaniya during the 21st, when news came from the Shaikh of Mohammerah that the Turks had accepted as decisive the outcome of the engagement at Sahil, had abandoned Baljaniya and evacuated Basra. On the 21st General Barrett learned, from a deputation of local notables of Basra, that Arabs were looting the town; the *Espiègle* and *Odin* were at once sent ahead, contriving by skilful seamanship to negotiate an obstruction across the Shatt-al-ʿArab at the north end of Umm-ar-Rasas Island,[1] consisting of the German s.s. *Ekbatana*, the Turkish lightship *Kilid-ul-Bahr*, the British lighter-ship *John o' Scott*, and one other vessel.[2] Basra was reached at dusk; the Custom House was on fire and full of plundering Arabs who were dispersed by landing parties. On the 22nd a small party of troops arrived and a beginning was made in the restoration of order; on the 23rd General Barrett arrived by land with his main force and made a ceremonial entry. The Union Jack was hoisted, and Sir Percy Cox read in Arabic a proclamation[3] which included the following statement of policy:

> 'The British Government has now occupied Basra, but though a state of war with the Ottoman Government still prevails, yet we have no enmity or ill-will against

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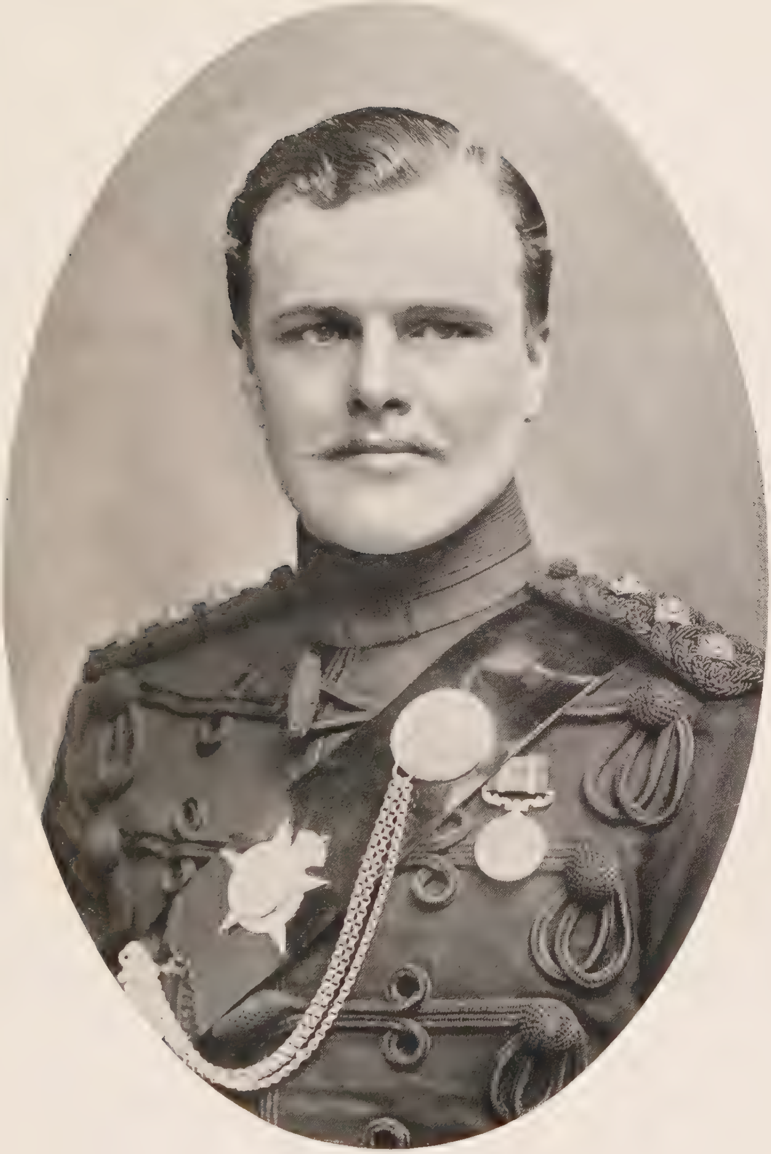
[1] 'Mother of lead', so called because it had been used by the British forces as a site for the batteries which bombarded Mohammerah in the Anglo-Persian War of 1856 (see Hunt).

[2] The four ships were tied together by cables and moored across the stream and the sea-cocks opened; all went well until the last moment, when the cables parted and the s.s. *Ekbatana* was swung by the current to the Persian side of the channel where it immediately sank, leaving the channel clear. Navigation past this point, which became known as Satan's Gap, was dangerous by night, but until late in 1918 it was considered better to leave the wrecks alone. In January 1919 it was found that they had sunk so deep into the mud that a little demolition sufficed to give a depth of thirty feet over the obstacles (see Basra Port Admin. Rep. 1924).

[3] For full text see Appendix I.



CAPT. R. L. BIRDWOOD, C.I.E.
Indian Political Dept.
Killed in action, 17th Nov. 1914

the population, to whom we hope to prove good friends and protectors. No remnant of Turkish administration now remains in this region. In place thereof the British flag has been established, under which you will enjoy the benefits of liberty and justice, both in regard to your religious and secular affairs.'

With this proclamation the history of the civil administration of Mesopotamia begins; before describing how it took shape, we may pause a moment to consider the almost unique circumstances surrounding its inception.

In the first place, as truly stated above, no remnant of the Turkish administration remained: Turkish officials, high and low, had almost without exception decamped, often with the most essential records; the offices of Government in the *Sarai* had been pillaged, and some of the papers destroyed; what remained had been unceremoniously piled, in utter disorder, in the yard by our troops in the effort to make the most of the scanty quarters available for billeting. A portion of these were, it is true, salved and sorted, after months of patient effort, by the staff of the Revenue Department, but the absence of Turkish records proved for many years a serious handicap. The vanished Turkish administration had not indeed been efficient, but it was comprehensive, and, like the Thirty-nine Articles, was accepted as an inevitable anachronism by all, though understood by none. It had governed the lives and transactions of the Arab population with a few interludes for three centuries, and it was incumbent upon us, by accepted international law, to maintain it as far as possible intact pending the conclusion, not only of the war, but of a treaty of peace prescribing a new administration to succeed it. Matters were further complicated by the fact that, as indicated in the proclamation, we sought to make a clear distinction between the Turk and his government, and the Arab population. The former we sought to destroy, with the latter we desired to be friendly, if they would reciprocate.[1] To promote this cleavage—a military object of great importance—was the function of the civil administration which, as the months and years passed, became involved in endless but necessary controversies with branches of the General Staff and with military departments. Bitter experience of Arab hostility, Arab thefts, and Arab rapacity occasionally tempted departmental chiefs to embark without full consideration upon policies the repercussions of which might well endanger a delicate political structure.

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[1] In this connection extracts from the previous proclamations, one issued before the capture of Basra and one a month later, should be quoted:

(*a*) 'The British Government has no quarrel with the Arab inhabitants on the river bank, and so long as they show themselves friendly and do no tharbour Turkish troops or go about armed, they have nothing to fear and neither they nor their property will be molested.'

(*b*) 'As regards the Arabs the British Government has no desire to treat them as enemies so long as they themselves remain friendly and neutral and refrain from taking up arms against her troops.

'On the contrary the wish of the British Government is to free the Arabs from the oppression of the Turk and to bring them advancement, prosperity and trade.'

For full text see Appendix I.

In course of time too, the problem presented itself in other forms, far beyond the limits of Mesopotamia. In the eyes of the law, the inhabitants of Basra were Turkish subjects, and in consequence alien enemies: to pay debts due or to deliver goods to them was illegal, to trade with them an offence; never were passports more necessary than during the war, never was consular protection more greatly needed or more earnestly sought, but the people of Basra were at first not entitled to any such privileges. A solution was of course speedily forthcoming; forms of passport were issued describing the bearer as an inhabitant of the Occupied Territories of Mesopotamia and entitled as such to British good offices.

To revert, however, to Basra: General Barrett's first act was to appoint as Military Governor of Basra, Major D'Arcy Brownlow, Deputy Judge-Advocate-General of the 6th Division. No better choice could have been made; his knowledge of Military Law enabled him, by instinct rather than by much study (for which there was no time), to shape the growth of the local civil organization on its early days on sound lines; his official position enabled him to exercise his functions without undue interference from energetic commanders or over zealous departmental subordinates. His Assistant was Mr. R. W. Bullard, who as Acting British Consul in Basra had been a spectator of the bellicose tumults and the feverish war preparations of the Turks.[1] He, at all events, knew what passions lurked in the grisly depths below the surface of affairs, and his knowledge of the country, combined with a sense of humour and, on occasions, a mordant tongue, were of priceless value at this critical moment. Tom Dexter, for thirty years in the R.I.M.S. *Comet*, the stationnaire of the Baghdad Residency, was Major Brownlow's personal assistant: he, too, had peculiar qualifications; he knew Arabs of all classes even better than he knew Arabic; he was respected, and he knew the Tigris.[2]

The Military Governor's first concern was public order: British and Indian Military Police, under the Provost Marshal, were on the streets within a few hours of the arrival of the force, but they had their limitations, and the size of I.E.F. 'D' was too exiguous to make it possible to spare them in adequate numbers. The Turkish Chief of

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[1] Acting on orders from the British Embassy at Constantinople he left Basra when war broke out and went to Mohammerah.

[2] He was later in the war captured at Kut (see Chapters VIII and IX).

Photo by Russell

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR ARTHUR A. BARRETT
G.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O.
Indian Army
Died 20th October 1926

Police with his whole staff had disappeared; a substitute had to be found, and that quickly, for piracy had begun on the Shatt-al-ʿArab and armed bands of robbers infested the date-groves from Fao to Basra. Sir Percy Cox had applied in advance to India for Mr. Gregson, of the Indian Police Department, whose long experience on the North-West Frontier, and in connexion with the Arms Traffic in the Persian Gulf, marked him out as the ideal person. He arrived within a week of the fall of Basra, with a tried staff, and within a few months had established police posts wherever they had existed in Turkish days—though not always in the same buildings, for the Arab marauders had destroyed some posts, taking away and selling even the bricks. Forty-eight hours after the Turks had left, not a single Government building outside Basra possessed doors or window-frames.

The organization of a Police Force for the Basra district proved extremely difficult; the indigenous population was cautiously friendly, but their fear that the Turks might ultimately return and vent their wrath on those who had taken service under an alien and infidel enemy prevented all but a very few until after the battle of Shuʿaiba from offering to join any branch of the civil administration. Nor could we blame them. They had seen Arabs brutally hanged in public for less; they had seen Arab malefactors boiled alive on the *Maidan* in Basra when Fakhri Pasha was governor; they knew that inconvenient prisoners had been sewn into sacks and dropped into the Shatt-al-ʿArab by night. Every consideration of prudence suggested the wisdom of deferring till a more convenient date an open change of allegiance.

The first police were therefore Indians—mostly Muslims from the Punjab—with a few Somalis from Aden, and right well they played their allotted part. An Indian constable is a humble fellow with no proud looks and with no desire to exercise himself in great matters, but with the instincts of his Moghul ancestors. He picked up the language with a facility which his superiors envied, he dealt with Arabs with an urbanity worthy of the Metropolitan Police, and professional evil-doers who had underrated his faculty for observation and action found themselves in jail, or in certain cases prisoners of war, in such numbers that by April civil peace was effectively restored. A few robbers, who had added murder to their crimes, perished on the scaffold by sentence of court-martial: their death excited no sympathy and much relief, for in practically every case they were men with a long and evil record of crime, who had lived by murder, robbery or blackmail. From these small beginnings sprang a force which to-day numbers over 7,000, is exclusively Arab in composition, and is responsible for the maintenance of order amongst a population of 2¾ millions, scattered over some

173,000 square miles, and for the supervision of a frontier of over 2,500 miles.[1]

Mr. Gregson's appointment in Force Orders as 'Commissioner of Police' did not pass unnoticed in Delhi, and the Foreign Department telegraphed privately demurring to the title, which in India is applied only to the Chief of Police in a Presidency town. They were reminded in reply that the appointment was made by the G.O.C. in the exercise of his creative discretion, and they were invited to refer to Genesis ii. 19. No earlier or higher authority could be quoted, even by the Government of India, and the matter was not pursued further.

In considering the very rapid growth of a somewhat elaborate form of administration at Basra, and later elsewhere, it must be borne in mind that the necessity of establishing a sanitary system approaching European standards was imperatively forced on us by military needs. The force arrived in winter, in a wet year; the desert was a sea of mud; the date-groves were fetid morasses; the few elevated areas were for the most part occupied by reed huts and surrounded by refuse-heaps, which were tolerated by the local population, but would have been fatal to raw troops. Billeting had to be resorted to on a large scale, which necessitated an elaborate sanitary organization; and this, in its turn, involved detailed supervision of local amenities by the Military Governor, who found it necessary within a few weeks to appoint deputies for Basra City and Ashar. On them fell the burden of providing billets and enforcing sanitary regulations: the first would have been an intolerable burden on the population had it not been decided, from the outset, to pay a fair rent for all houses taken, and to require the complete removal therefrom of all the inhabitants. The recognition of this principle—not without reluctance—by the military authorities saved endless friction and made it possible to maintain in the various billets a standard of cleanliness which would in any other circumstances have been impracticable; nevertheless, as will be seen hereafter, billeting remained to the last one of the principal grievances of the civil population.

The entire dependence of the force, for land operations, on animal transport made it essential to extend supervision as quickly as possible to every animal in Basra and the neighbourhood. There were only three veterinary officers with the force on its arrival and for long after, but they were remarkably prompt and businesslike in the steps they took to secure the safety from infection of the animals in their charge. Within a few months of the occupation of Basra all horses, mules, and donkeys were being systematically inspected. Suspicious cases were quarantined or destroyed, compensation being paid from civil revenues. A free animal clinic was established and at once became popular.

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[1] For a brief account of the 'Iraq Police see *The Police Journal*, vol. i, no. 1, 1928.

> 'These measures', writes Maj.-Gen. Sir L. J. Blenkinsop,[1] 'demanded money and the confidence of the Arab owner. The first—and it was not a negligible amount—was forthcoming promptly from the political service; the second was a plant of slower growth, but was assisted by the fact that a few Arab dealers (well known at Poona, in India, to some of the veterinary officers) were held up at Basra by hostilities; these Arabs . . . spread abroad testimony to the ability and reliability and impeccability of the British officer in relation to horses.'

This work, directed by Captain H. Stephenson, A.V.C. (who was later captured at Kut), was of the greatest service to the army and the civil population, and though glanders, biliary fever, and epizootic lymphangitis were rife in Basra, the health of army transport mules and cavalry horses was effectively preserved.

The demand for labour brought Arabs and Persians from afar to Basra. Prices rose, and by December the cheaper sorts of dates were selling at a price higher by far than that realized by the best qualities of dates exported to Europe before war was declared. Money began to flow freely, but not Turkish coin; the supply of the latter would have in any case been inadequate, and the Turks had, in point of fact, removed all the gold and silver they could lay their hands on, giving notes or promises to pay in exchange. Indian currency was perforce introduced, and a rate of exchange as between rupees and Turkish liras fixed by proclamation, giving rise, incidentally, to many knotty problems as between Banks and their clients, and for the Law Courts.[2]

Whilst these and other ancillary activities were being pursued behind the lines, General Barrett was considering his future course of action. Beyond the occupation of Basra he had no orders, nor indeed any indication of probable future policy, though he had received copies of such correspondence as had passed and had the advantage of the presence on his staff of Sir Percy Cox who, as already stated, had been in close touch with the situation till the moment of his departure from Simla. After a lengthy telegraphic discussion the idea of a forward move with Baghdad as the objective was for the time being rejected, but an advance as far as Qurna was sanctioned, as also a proposal by General Barrett to place a post at Shuʿaiba, five miles north of Zubair, in order to consolidate the military position. This place was occupied on 4th December without opposition; Qurna, at the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates, was captured on Dec. 9th after much manœuvring and some brisk fighting. Over a thousand Turkish troops were captured, together with the Wali of Basra, Subhi Bey. The Turkish gun-boat *Marmaris* eluded the Royal Navy for the time being by escaping up river, where it was subsequently beached and burnt.

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[1] *History of the Great War based on Official Documents—Veterinary Services*, 1925.

[2] At a later stage, owing to the increasing value of gold, it became necessary to prohibit its use, import or export.

The seizure of Qurna ended the first phase of our operations, which, thanks to the effective co-operation of the Royal Navy, had been uniformly successful. Unless the Turks could raise the local Arabs against us they now had either to acquiesce in our occupation, or to transfer a relatively large number of troops from other points to restore the position. Of the attitude of the inhabitants of the Shatt-al-ʿArab littoral between Fao and Qurna we had no doubts, and it is pleasant to be able to record after a lapse of fifteen years that at no time has any unpleasant incident marred the course of our relations with them.

The first political officer at Qurna was Captain J. S. Crosthwaite, who was at Mohammerah on the outbreak of war and had succeeded Birdwood as Assistant to Sir Percy Cox. From the Muntafiq Shaikh ʿAjaimi Sir Percy Cox had received, before we had even occupied Basra, an emissary, Muhammad ʿAsaimi, who stated that his master was only ostensibly co-operating with the Turkish troops, and that he wished to submit to us and to hand over 4,000 Turkish rifles in his hands. It seemed reasonable to suppose that his neutrality, if not active co-operation, and that of others, might be secured by judicious diplomacy if we could make an advance before the effect of our recent victory had worn off. The Persian tribes on the left bank were quiet, and though we had not yet heard from Ibn Saʿud, his relations with the Turks were such that we could count on his benevolence.

One essential, however, was lacking: we could not accept Arab co-operation on the understanding that the Turkish régime had gone for ever, and then allow the Turks to return; without some explicit assurance on the subject it was clear that the Arabs would not commit themselves definitely, for fear of subsequent Turkish reprisals. We could not honourably ask them to take our side until we were sure in our own minds that we should eventually be prepared to stand by them. The British Government, however, was unable to endorse any such assurances, holding that such a course would be considered by its Allies as a breach of faith.

How far-reaching were the effects of this decision is now clear in the light of subsequent events, though its implications were never absent from the minds of those on the spot. A policy of whole-hearted co-operation between British and Arab elements in Mesopotamia was henceforth impossible. The most we could ask and insist on was friendly neutrality, paid for directly by subsidies or indirectly by employing labour and transport at fair rates. We could not frankly appeal to the leaders to abandon their ancient, if half-hearted, loyalties, and to cast in their lot with the new order of things, nor was the time ripe for any plans for an Arab Government of 'Iraq. Baghdad was not yet in our hands, and scarcely included in our future plans. Yet the idea of an independent Arab administration was already in the air, for the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, in a telegram on the subject of the possible occupation of Baghdad, wrote: 'I consider that it is premature to take action which appears to oblige consideration both by Allies *and by Arabs*[1] of ultimate settlement of Mesopotamia and other parts of the Turkish Empire. It will be a most complicated matter. . . .' The Arabs of Mesopotamia themselves had scarcely given the matter a thought: they had always regarded themselves as part of the Turkish Empire, and had never desired anything more than some form of autonomy under the Sultan. But the idea had already been born, and in the spring and summer of 1913 and 1914 the political condition of Turkish 'Iraq was more disturbed than it had been for some years.

Though there was nothing like an organized Arab movement,[2] Arab nationalists were actively working hand-in-hand with Syrian nationalist bodies against the existing Turkish system of government. The movement, moreover, was not a new one; it had its roots in the past, and as recently as 1905 had shown unexpected vitality. In that year the 'Ligue de la Patrie Arabe' issued a formal appeal to the Powers announcing their intention to found an independent Arabian Empire under the sovereignty of 'the religious Caliph of all Muslims throughout the world'. They promised to respect the interests of all foreigners and all concessions granted by the Turks, the autonomy of the Lebanon, the *status quo* in the Christian sanctuaries in Palestine, and the 'independent principalities of the Yemen and the Persian Gulf'. They explained that they asked the Powers for no sacrifices in their favour: 'we only beg the humane States of Europe and North America to assist our movement by their simple neutrality, and to encourage us by their sympathy; then we shall know how to complete our holy and glorious enterprise.'

At this juncture Arabia proper seemed lost to Turkey: Turkish forces in the Yemen under Ahmad Feizi Pasha had been defeated; Sana' had successfully stood a siege; and Syrian troops had deserted *en masse* to the side of the Arabs. The Imam of Yemen, Mahmud Yahya, had been elected guardian of the shrines of Mecca and Medina. The movement, however, failed to take root, and within three years the Constitution was restored and Turkish authority re-established, with the moral support of Germany. The Kaiser, indeed, was widely believed to have offered military support the Sultan against the rebel provinces in return for certain concessions and commercial advantages.[1] The Kurds, too, were stirring and seeking fresh chiefs and a new orientation of policy.

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[1] The italics are the writer's.

[2] For a one-sided but intimate account—from the Turkish point of view—see Djemal Pasha, p. 197 et seq.

Basra took the lead in the Arab movement under the guidance of Saiyid Talib al Naqib, a member of one of the most respected Sunni families on the Shatt-al-ʿArab. After a brief flirtation with the Committee of Union and Progress he found that its Ottomanizing policy left no scope for his ambition which, it was claimed, was nothing less than the establishment of an autonomous Arab province, ruled by himself. His aims had brought him into conflict not only with the C.U.P. but with the Sʿadun, a powerful Sunni family hierarchy who controlled the Muntafiq Arabs, themselves Shiʿahs. The Ottoman Government had captured Sʿadun Pasha himself in 1911 with the aid of Saiyid Talib, who thus earned the hatred of Sʿadun's son, ʿAjaimi, and forced the latter to join hands with the C.U.P. in opposition to the 'Liberal' party under Talib. In the spring of 1913 the Wali of Basra had attempted to counter Talib's growing influence with the help of the Muntafiq under ʿAjaimi, but unsuccessfully. The Turkish Commandant, a staunch Committee man, was assassinated in the public street, and the municipal authorities forced by Talib to demand 'reform'. The Committee gave way for the moment, but determined to get rid of Saiyid Talib. He got wind, however, of their intentions and immediately before the war entered into negotiations with us through the Shaikh of Mohammerah; but his ambitions were too personal to be an acceptable basis for discussion, and he left for Central Arabia. After the outbreak of war he retired to Ceylon, and in 1917 to Egypt, returning to Basra in February 1920.[2]

Saiyid Talib was not the sole exponent of Arab nationalist views known to us, for we received in Basra during the first six months of the war one or two young Arab emissaries, including Nuri Saʿid Beg,

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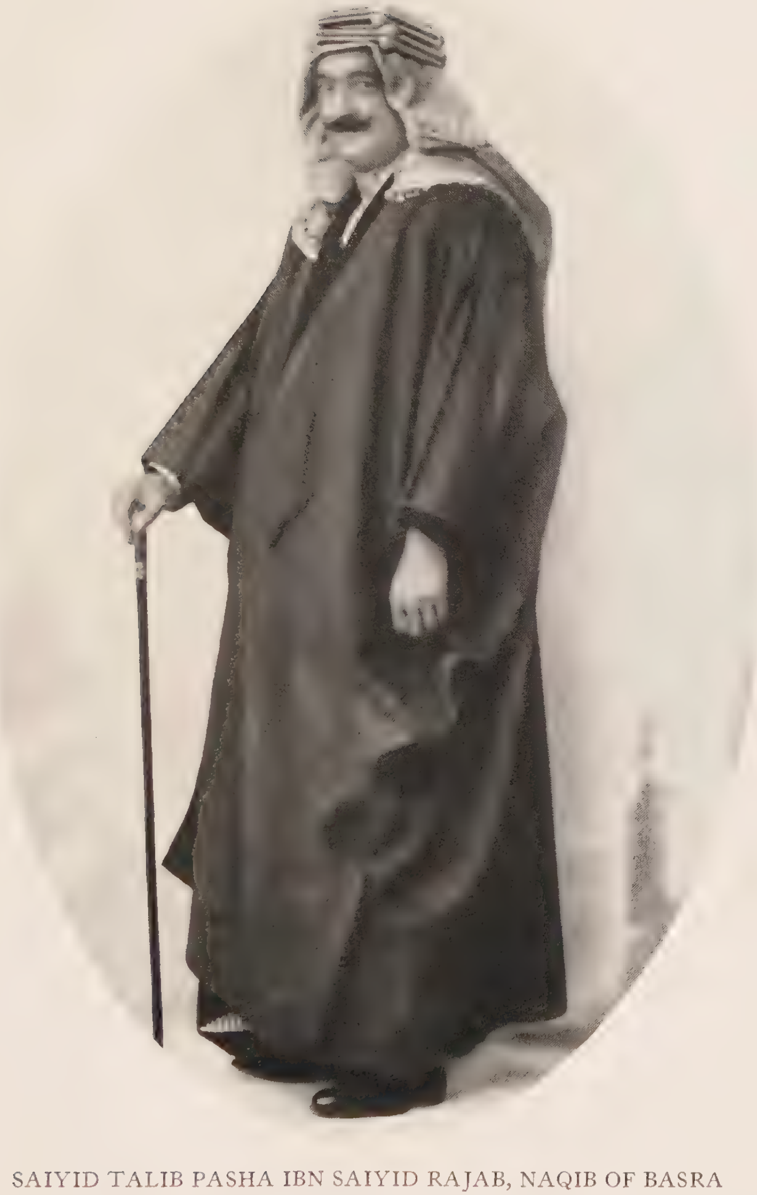
[1] See Dunn.

[2] Saiyid Talib ibn Saiyid Rajab died at the age of 61 in July 1929 at Munich, whither he had flown from Basra to receive medical treatment. Reference is made elsewhere in this work to the circumstances of his return to ʿIraq in 1920. His last years were spent quietly in agricultural pursuits. He left behind him two sons, who were educated at Oxford, and a reputation for the pursuit of personal but not necessarily unworthy aims with vigour and determination, and by methods which might have succeeded under the Turkish régime, but were out of place in the years following the war. His body was brought from Germany to Basra for burial in the family graveyard of the Naqib at Zubair: the occasion gave rise to a demonstration unique in the history of ʿIraq, a vast concourse drawn from every part of the sanjaq collecting both at Basra and at Zubair.



SAIYID TALIB PASHA IBN SAIYID RAJAB, NAQIB OF BASRA

Died July 1929

afterwards a prominent member of the ʿIraq Government, who desired to enlist British support, whilst Ibn Saʿud, in the desert fastnesses of Najd, had already, just before the war, thrown off the Turkish yoke and evicted the Turkish garrisons of Al Hasa and Al ʿOdaid. Generally speaking, however, in the absence of specific guarantees for the future, the Arab leaders at this stage remained officially loyal to the Turks. ʿAjaimi Sʿadun, indeed, was playing with the idea of joining us, but the advances that he had made, as mentioned above, through Muhammad ʿAsaimi and through other channels came to nothing. Finally, on 30th January, Sir Percy Cox was compelled to take the initiative. He recapitulated what had occurred, and suggested a meeting at Shuʿaiba: but, he added, time pressed and a reply was required within three days. The only answer given was that ʿAjaimi feared that his reputation would suffer if he abandoned the Turks for no cause, but that he would find an excuse for leaving them. His difficulty, as we were soon to learn, lay in determining on which side his interests lay. He distrusted the Turks, but they had promised him the gift of all Saniya (Crown) lands in the Basra wilayat. The British, on the other hand, were strangers in the land, they could promise him little or nothing, and he believed, or affected to believe, that we were in league with Saiyid Talib and his friends. So he hesitated, and finally threw in his lot, for better, for worse, with the Turks, who had been responsible only a few years before for his father's shameful death of disease in the jail at Aleppo. He never again faltered in his allegiance[1] and never returned to the land of his fathers. Such men are not without honour, save in their own country: he was offered, but refused, full amnesty in 1920.

Those minor chiefs who were temporarily at all events behind the British lines showed greater confidence in us than we had any right to expect. One of the first to come in was Shaikh Ibrahim of Zubair, a little oasis separated in wet weather from Basra by eight miles of muddy desert which, until we made the great *bund* from Shuʿaiba to above Maʿqil, was flooded every year to a depth of two or three feet. The population of Zubair were Sunnis, and had acted from time immemorial as intermediaries and brokers between the desert Arabs, who seldom ventured into the towns, and the merchants of Basra, who were equally ill at ease out of sight of the date-groves. Many Basra people own property in Zubair and are wont to spend part of the hot weather in the clear dry atmosphere of the desert. Zubair was a typical Eastern whispering gallery, and to those who could sift the stories endlessly retailed in the coffee shops it became a valuable centre of information. Shaikh Ibrahim himself, courteous, hospitable, keen-eyed, and proud of the position of semi-independence that he and his predecessors had enjoyed under the Turks, was well aware that his position was neither more nor less secure than our own, for we could not protect him against Turkish vengeance if we were defeated; his state of mind, when he cared to reveal it, was an infallible guide to the local appraisement of our military prospects. He served us well, and in doing so, alas, became too prosperous: his pride overcame him, his insistence on his right to levy taxes and to treat as he liked the villagers and the Basrawi who owned property in Zubair were his undoing, and in 1920 it became necessary to depose him. It was a painful decision to take; his pathetic figure, and his dignified appeals to the authorities not thus to let his enemies triumph over him, remain deeply engraved in my memory. The official machine was too strong for him: our little finger had proved thicker than our predecessors' loins. In the light of subsequent events I feel that he was dealt with too harshly: had his crimes been greater, he would probably have suffered less at our hands, but that is our way.

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[1] For a fuller discussion of ʿAjaimi's policies see Miss G. L. Bell's *Review*.

The Shaikh of Qurna was another such; we had scarcely occupied Basra when we received messages of fealty from him. On the occupation of Qurna we confirmed him in his office, and when the Viceroy of India visited the place he conferred on Shaikh Uqbashi a deserved robe of honour. Despite many vicissitudes he continued to retain his office, and to amass a respectable competence. A bit of a scholar, with a good knowledge of local history and current tradition and a certain rugged eloquence, he contributed not a little to the education of successive political officers at Qurna, and his ready tongue and quick wit made him a welcome visitor to high officials on tour, and to the Political Office at Basra.

Nor must I forget to mention Haji Adhar, Shaikh of Hartha, between Basra and Qurna, and Na'um Abbo; of the numerous rural magnates in the sanjaq of Basra Haji Adhar was the first and for a long time the only one definitely to enter the service of the Civil Administration. Wounded and captured by us on the stricken field of Kut-al-Zain, he had contrived to secure the intervention in his behalf of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, who procured his release and encouraged us to employ him. Na'um Abbo was a Chaldean Christian of Basra, who had long been employed as dragoman by successive British Consuls at Basra. He was the first man amongst the local population to attach himself definitely to our interests, well knowing the fate which awaited him if the Turks came back. For his moral courage at this critical moment he deserves his meed of praise.

Capt. F. L. DYER
Indian Army
Killed 15*th March* 1915

CHAPTER II[1]

THE OCCUPATION OF QURNA AND THE BATTLE OF SHU'AIBA

'The desire to be forward in engaging the enemy is not uncommon in the British army; but that quality which I wish to see officers possess, who are at the head of troops, is a cool, discriminating judgment in action, which will enable them to decide with promptitude how far they can and ought to go with propriety.'

DUKE OF WELLINGTON, *15th May* 1811.

Defective Intelligence Reports. Lord Morley's veto. Declaration of Jihad. *Turks invade Persian Territory. Bakhtiari unrest. Death of Captain Dyer. Protection of oil-fields. Lord Hardinge visits Basra. Reinforcements sent to Ahwaz. Negotiations with Ibn Sa'ud. Death of Captain Shakespear. General Nixon arrives. Battle of Shu'aiba. Unrest in Persia. Mission of Sir Percy Sykes. Disturbances at Shiraz and Bushire.*

THE first months of 1915 were pregnant with great issues, both military and civil. When the Expeditionary Force left India it had no objective beyond Basra: this objective once attained, future policy had to be decided by an exchange of telegrams. Within a few hours of our arrival at Basra Sir Percy Cox was asking the Government of India, as the result of urgent representations made to him by the commercial community in Basra, to consider the possibility of occupying Baghdad at the earliest possible moment, the seizure of 'Amara and Nasiriya as a means to that end, and the occupation of Qurna as an immediate necessity. Though a highly competent Committee appointed by the Government of India had considered the whole problem and had in a report dated 15th January 1912 advocated the occupation of Fao and Basra in certain contingencies, the military authorities, alike in India and Whitehall, had taken practically no steps to collect accurate data as to the strategical and practical implications of such a policy. Lord Morley's instructions[2] to the Government of India were, as shown by his *Recollections*, designed to encourage concentration by the Indian military authorities on problems peculiarly their own. They do not, however, absolve the Indian General Staff from neglecting, when war was known to be inevitable, public sources of information. It is within my personal knowledge (confirmed by the *Official War Record of the Survey of*

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, Lorimer, Willcocks, *Mesopotamia Commission Report*, *Naval Review*, vol. iii, *Survey of India War Record.*

[2] The demarcation of spheres of intelligence between the War Office and India, which assigned Turkish Arabia to the former, dates from 1905, before Lord Morley entered the India Office.

India, p. 7) that they relied on such of Sir William Willcocks's maps and reports as they happened to find in the Consulate at Basra, though these had been published and were obtainable from any bookseller. Though ample sources of information were open to them, the Intelligence Departments of the British and Indian Armies had virtually no hand-books of value and had neglected to make use of those that already existed. Indeed, the summary of elementary facts regarding the Basra wilayat, which constitutes the first chapter of the Official History of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, concludes complacently with the remark that 'it should be borne in mind that the above description of the country contains much information that was only obtained by our forces in Mesopotamia after months of actual experience'. Yet for over a century the Government of India had retained a representative at Baghdad, as Consul-General, and until the end of the nineteenth century the Consulate at Basra was staffed by members of the Indian Political Department, men well accustomed to furnish reliable reports on every conceivable subject, and usually soldiers. Sir William Willcocks had recently made elaborate surveys and had published his conclusions, with a number of valuable meteorological tables. Still more recently a distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service, an officer of the Indian Political Department, Mr. J. G. Lorimer, had been engaged for several years on the compilation of an elaborate Gazetteer covering the greater part of Mesopotamia from Baghdad to the sea. General Head-quarters as a whole showed at all times a marked reluctance to consult local British residents as to practical possibilities and probable climatic and seasonal exigencies. The Intelligence Branch was active and generally effective, but the other branches, especially those of the Quartermaster-General and the Principal Medical Officer, apparently preferred to proceed by method of trial and error. The trials were those of the troops: the errors those of a shortsighted and often unduly complacent hierarchy.

During January the efforts made by the Ottoman Government to give the contest the character of a Holy War against the infidel began to bear fruit. The *jihad*[1] had been preached in every mosque in Syria and Mesopotamia, and emissaries had been busy amongst the tribes and in the towns urging them to do battle in the name of the Faith. The effect of the campaign was ostensibly greatest amongst the Shiʿah tribes of the Mesopotamian delta 'whose only gods', to quote a Turkish writer, 'were gifts and success'. Tribal hordes gathered on the flanks of the Turkish force at Shuʿaiba, but played little or no part in the battle on 12th April. On the evening of the second day, before the

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[1] This is one of the five tenets of Islam, the other four being Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, and the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

Turks had given way, the tribes deserted them; twenty-four hours later a general retirement began, preluded by the suicide of the Turkish Commander Sulaiman Bey al 'Askari. The fleeing Turkish soldiery, as they toiled through the mud along the shores of the Hammar Lake, were butchered without mercy by the Muntafiq bands, and only a mere remnant under Sulaiman al 'Askari's lieutenant, 'Ali Bey, reached the shelter of the *sarai* at Nasiriya. Never again did the Turks invite the Arabs to co-operate in organized military operations. The religious volunteers who collected, and were dispersed, at Shu'aiba, did not make a second appearance on the battlefield, and the subsequent treatment by the Turks of Karbala and Najaf, cities not less sacred in the estimation of Shi'ah Muslims than Mecca, put an end to the possibility of any recrudescence of the wilder forms of fanaticism in that quarter. Stories of Arab treachery resounded through the Turkish Empire, and the older Arabs, feeling their estrangement from the Ottoman Caliphate to be irrevocable, began to dream dreams, and their young men to see visions.

Yet among the Arabs of Persian 'Arabistan—now once more known as Khuzistan—whose sympathies with the Turks were in inverse ratio to their practical acquaintance with Ottoman administrative methods, the call to *jihad*, backed as it was by a strong Turkish force, met with some measure of success. The appeals which had left the majority of tribesmen in 'Iraq cold fell amongst the marshes of Hawaiza on more favourable soil, and the Bani Turuf and their neighbours rose in support of the Turks. Their action surprised the most experienced native observers, for these tribes had always been hostile both to the Turks, as Sunnis, and to Ghadhban of the Bani Lam, who accompanied the Turks with a large force of tribesmen. The Arabs of the Hawaiza district had, indeed, always regarded the Bani Lam as their inveterate foes, and many were the deeds of cruelty associated with their endless raids across the Persian frontier.

These feelings were, however, overcome by the attractive prospect of obtaining the powerful aid of an invading Turkish army to settle old scores in a different quarter. No love was lost between them and their overlord, Shaikh Khaz'al of Mohammerah. His increasing success in the collection of revenue dues on behalf of the Persian Government and in the maintenance of order was a standing grievance amongst the Shaikhs, who for a century or more—probably much more—had contrived to 'eat' the revenue dues themselves. The British, as friends and supporters of the Shaikh of Mohammerah[1] and as unbelievers, came equally under the ban. The outburst was infectious and it spread from tribe to tribe in ʿArabistan, for all at heart were well content with the prospect of a reversion to 'the good old rule, the simple plan, that he should take who had the power, and he should keep who can'. The Bani Salih, Bani Tamim, and Bani Sikain, west of the Karun, sent detachments to join the Turks at Illa close to Kut Nahr Hashim on the Karkha, whilst on 5th February the Bawi north-east of Ahwaz co-operated in cutting the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's pipe-lines and telephone-wires, to damage which was no doubt the secondary object of the Turks; the Chʿab of Fallahiya and the Mirs of Hindian, 40 and 80 miles east of Mohammerah respectively, declared for the Turks, as also did the populace of Ram Hormuz.

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[1] The Marquess of Crewe, speaking in the House of Lords on 18th November 1914, referred to 'our Ally, the Shaikh of Mohammerah, who is as we know, under Persian suzerainty, but who is on special terms of intimacy with the British Government'.

Shushtar and Dizful alone, though hotbeds of religious fanaticism in earlier days, prudently and somewhat unexpectedly held aloof from the movement and awaited developments; the Bakhtiari tribes did likewise. The menace on this flank was for some months acute, and failure to restrain the forces of anarchy in this region would have been only less disastrous than defeat at Shuʿaiba. We seemed to have no alternative but to do what the Turks presumably wished us to do, namely to split up our forces, at least momentarily.

Persia was restless under untiring hostile pressure, in which the Swedish officers of the Persian gendarmerie were participating; in the north-west the tide of war between Russia and Turkey had overflowed into Azarbaijan, with devastating results to Persian territory: whole districts were despoiled of crops and cattle, villages and even towns destroyed, and famine in its most terrible forms soon reigned in the land. The news from Ahwaz was grave; the Shaikh of Mohammerah had lost control, the Persian Government was well-intentioned but powerless, and dared not to risk public disapproval by any action likely to lead to war with Turkey. The Bakhtiaris as a whole stood firm, but an important section had espoused the Turco-German cause, and private rivalries amongst the leading families made concerted action in any direction impossible. The responsible chiefs, however, were determined that no harm should be done to the oil-fields of Masjid Sulaiman, which lay in tribal territory thirty miles east of Shushtar and seventy miles north of Ahwaz. The principal danger at this juncture was the lack of specie with which to pay the Bakhtiari and other labourers on the oil-fields. Two of the leading Khans, Sardar Jang and Sardar Bahadur (who later succeeded to the style and title of his father Sardar Asʿad), responded nobly to the exhortations of the Persian Government and to the call of the Company. They realized at once the importance of keeping all hands at work, and despite widespread disorder succeeded in bringing to the fields a sum of no less than

£160,000 in cash, on the backs of some thirty mules, in charge of a single Armenian clerk, without the loss of a single silver piece.

The local guards were doubled, the passes watched: and though the redoubtable Herr Wassmuss, of whom more hereafter, passed through Shushtar and Ram Hormuz on his way to Bushire hinterland, the golden seed that he sowed so profusely fell on soil more than usually barren. Only one casualty occurred, on the outskirts of the area. Captain F. L. Dyer, I.A., whose services just before the war had been placed temporarily at the disposal of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, was shot near Darra Khazina in the no-man's-land between Arab and Bakhtiari tribal areas. His death was primarily the outcome of one of those misunderstandings which occur so easily when tribal feelings are roused. A posse of Arabs who were searching for a party of Lur bandits who had been raiding into the plains mistook Captain Dyer and his party for the quarry of which they were in search, and opened fire. Captain Dyer took shelter under a mound and shot one of the Arabs dead. On realizing the tragic mistake of both sides, the Arabs begged Dyer to leave his rifle with them and fly, lest the dead man's brother should come up and kill him in revenge. Dyer's horse bolted, and he fled on foot, pursued by the dead man's brother, who soon caught him up. Unarmed and helpless, he stood, as I afterwards learned, erect, face to face with his enemy, and fell shot through the head; he lies buried on the oil-fields.[1] A good linguist, a good soldier, a keen polo player, and a good shot, he was a valuable influence in whatever society his lot was cast, and in the critical days when the community at Masjid Sulaiman was completely isolated he did much to inculcate amongst his comrades and Persians alike the *mens aequa rebus in arduis* that successive generations have learned at school to cultivate. His death served to remind the Bakhtiari Khans of the menace of anarchy; to their credit be it recorded that though the fortunes of war seemed often to favour our enemies, yet never did any sort of disturbance occur in their area and never did it prove necessary to dispatch troops from Ahwaz to the oil-fields themselves, though a detachment was posted at the pumping station at Tembi some five miles to the south.

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[1] The inscription on his grave is as follows:

CAPTAIN F. L. DYER
93rd BURMA INFANTRY
KILLED BY AN ARAB
WHEN ON DUTY NEAR DARRAH KHAZINA
BORN SEPT. 10, 1884. DIED AP. 15, 1915.
SIC ANTE DIEM PERIIT
MILES REBUS PACIS AC BELLI
PARITER APTISSIMUS
HUNC LAPIDEM
PONENDUM CURAVERUNT
AMICI DESIDERANTES
A GOOD LIFE HATH ITS NUMBER OF DAYS
AND A GOOD NAME CONTINUETH FOR EVER. (Ecclus. xli. 13)

At Ahwaz, however, we could look for no such stalwart, if disunited, friends. Whilst escorting the Political Officer with the troops, Captain A. J. H. Grey, Gunner Smith of H.M.S. *Comet* was shot in the back and killed by one of the Arab guards of the Deputy Governor, Shaikh Chasib, son of Shaikh Khazʿal of Mohammerah, who immediately had the man publicly executed by his fellow guards. The incident showed the extreme tension that was prevalent throughout the district. The Arabs were in the majority, and inclined to join the *jihad*; it was indeed clear that they would do so, unless troops were sent—and they could ill be spared. The Government of India was frankly opposed to their dispatch, holding that it was necessary in the first instance to repel attacks on Qurna and Basra, for a reverse at either of these places would be not less fatal to the pipe-lines than an outbreak of anarchy at Ahwaz. Nor was the British Admiralty, at this juncture, inclined to attach special importance to the oil-fields:[1] the First Lord (Mr. Churchill) had noted on 1st September 1914, on a minute by the Naval Staff urging the dispatch of troops to defend the oil works, that: 'There is little likelihood of any troops being available for this purpose. Indian forces must be used at the decisive point. We shall have to buy our oil from elsewhere. . . .' The *Comet*, now under the White Ensign, was, however, sent to Ahwaz on 29th January with a small party of the Dorsets. On the way she met a steamer bringing all the Europeans, the British Vice-Consul (Captain Ranking)[2] having decided, on the recommendation of the Deputy Governor, that the risk of their remaining was too great. This step had the approval of the local military authorities, and after the murder of Gunner Smith was probably prudent, but it heightened the feeling of insecurity in the oil-fields, and put heart into the enemy. Most of the Europeans returned with the *Comet* and lived out the difficult and critical days that followed.

The Turkish force reached the Karkha, twenty miles west of Ahwaz, in the first week of February 1915; it comprised two battalions, about 1,500 strong, two field-guns, over 100 sabres, and some 3,000 Arab auxiliaries, the majority of them under or associated with Shaikh

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[1] For a clear statement of the considerations which led H.M.'s Government to acquire a financial interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. Ltd., see Mr. Churchill's *The World Crisis*, vol. i, pp. 132, 134, 172.

[2] He was sent out to Persia in 1908 in connexlon with the protection of the Anglo-Persian oil-fields and had been in ʿArabistan ever since. He was killed by Tangistani raiders at Bushire on 12th July 1915.

Ghadhban, an old enemy of Shaikh Khazʿal and as keen as the Bani Turuf on paying off old scores. The Turkish Commander, Muhammad Pasha Daghistani, was a brave old man of seventy summers, embarrassed from the first by his Arab coadjutors, who were, in the event, responsible for doing more to wipe out his force than the joint efforts of the 6th and 12th Divisions. By the 7th February the detachment of the Dorsets at Ahwaz was strengthened by the arrival of the 7th Rajputs and by a force, furnished by the Shaikh of Mohammerah, of 1,000 to 1,500 Arabs. These were a menace rather than a source of security, and they included no representatives of the most important tribe, the Bawi, who were in open rebellion, though they had been favoured by the Shaikh of Mohammerah in many ways, and had for some years past been more accessible to and familiar with European ways and ideas than other tribes.

To the dispatch of this force to Ahwaz the Persian Government raised no objection: they, as in a lesser degree the Bakhtiari chiefs, had a large financial share in the oil-fields; they were also internally disunited and unable to do more than make vigorous protests at Constantinople against the invasion of Khuzistan by Turkish troops.

Whether or not the pipe-line was to be effectively protected by the dispatch of an adequate force to Ahwaz, and whether this force was to be drawn from Basra or from reinforcements on their way from India, was still undecided when Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, arrived in the Shatt-al-ʿArab on 4th February, though Lord Crewe, then at the India Office, had been urging on the Government of India the importance, on moral as well as material grounds, of such protection. With Lord Hardinge was Sir Valentine Chirol, who was in India not as correspondent of *The Times* but as a member of the Public Services Commission.[1]

In the absence of Sir Percy Cox, who had gone to the bar of the Shatt-al-ʿArab to meet the Viceroy, I took the responsibility as assistant to the Chief Political officer of carrying out a raid on the Mohammerah premises of Messrs. Wonckhaus & Co., a German firm with branches at Basra and several Gulf ports. The general question of the status of Germans in S.W. Persia had already been referred to the Viceroy with indecisive results, and I thought it best to strike before his arrival, without committing my chief. Everything went according to plan. The telegraph line to Ahwaz, which hung on wooden poles on the plain behind the town, was cut lest the manager of the German branch at Ahwaz should hear of the fate of his colleague. That done, I called on the Deputy Governor Agha ʿAbdi, an old friend, and told him what I proposed to do. 'Zur ast?' he asked laconically, 'It is force?' 'Zur ast,' I replied—and he raised no objection. I arrested the young German with the assistance of Lieutenant Baillie of the Dorsets, and placed him on board a launch which conveyed him to the mail steamer which passed down stream a few hours later. I hastily impounded all records and took charge of the safe, in which I found ample justification for my action and for the arrest of his colleague at Ahwaz (Herr Helmich), which was effected next day. This done, I hastened to meet the Viceroy's party on board the R.I.M.S. *Lawrence*.

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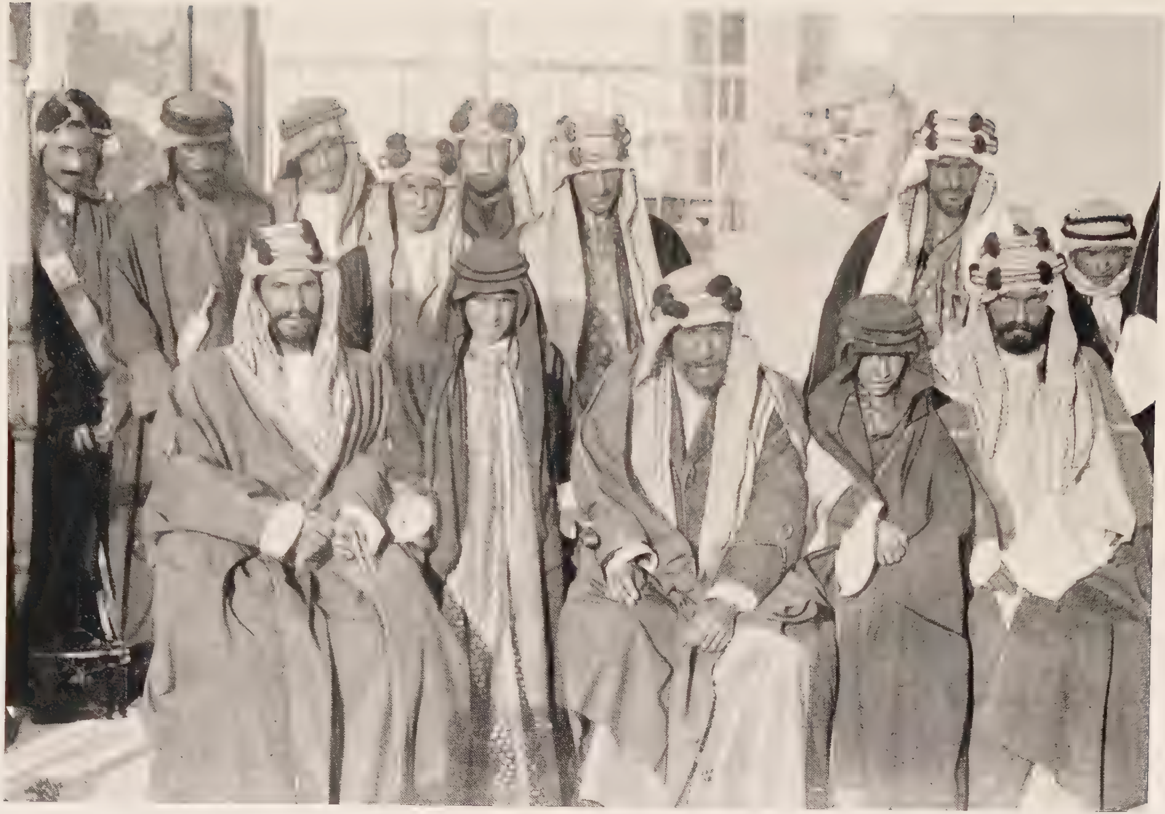
[1] See V. Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World*, p. 246.

As we steamed up the Karun I pointed out to the Viceroy the premises of Wonckhaus & Co., telling him that the agent had been arrested the previous night and that *pièces justificatives* were in my hands. 'Just as well he was arrested, perhaps', he said, 'but I do not think that our telegram quite covered it.' To avoid further discussion I drew from my pocket the draft Address of Welcome of the Basra merchants, which had been entrusted to me, and handed it to Sir Percy Cox to discuss with him.

Before Lord Hardinge left the Shatt-al-ʿArab on his way back to India, further and more serious news began to come in from Ahwaz. The Turkish force was collecting Arabs to cross the Karkha, further troops were on the way, the Chʿab of Fallahiya had risen, whilst the Bawi were frankly hostile. The pipe-line was cut on 5th February above and below Ahwaz and stores looted, though the pumping-stations were saved by the Arab guards who remained loyal, and by the unwillingness of the Bawi to proceed to extremes. The position of the little band of Europeans on the oil-fields, some eighteen men in all, was extremely precarious. Every sort of rumour was rife, and in the absence of official news could seldom be contradicted. That these men, and the engineers in charge of the pumping-stations, contrived during those anxious months to maintain intact the organization, then quite new, of the oil-fields, and to inspire confidence in the breasts of the simple tribesmen, freshly drawn from pastoral or predatory pursuits, reflects the highest credit alike on their courage and their good sense.

These events decided Sir Arthur Barrett to send further troops up the Karun, to defend not so much the pipe-line as his own communications, for it was becoming abundantly clear that the Arabs east of the Tigris would join the *jihad* unless they saw some sign of force. Reinforcements under Brig.-Gen. Robinson reached Ahwaz about 15th February, but any steadying effect they might have had was countered by the arrival on 20th February of Herr Wassmuss and other German agents at Shushtar on their way to Fars, and at Hawiza. A few days before, Sir Percy Cox had issued a proclamation (see App. I) threatening sequestration of the properties of those Shaikhs in the Basra wilayat who departed from the path of friendship and neutrality and took up



IBN SA'UD MUBARAK-AS-SABAH

Photo by Capt. W. H. I. Shakespear, Kuwait
March 1909

arms in co-operation with the enemy; it was well-timed and confirmed a few waverers in their faith, but all realized, none better than the British, that the issue would before long be decided by the sword.

On 2nd March an unsuccessful action was fought by General Robinson against the newly arrived Turkish force, aided by greatly superior numbers of Arabs led by Ghadhban; the fight took place in the low hills some ten miles north-west of Aminiya, a village opposite Ahwaz; our little force lost 62 killed and 127 wounded, but they gave a good account of themselves, the enemy admitting the loss of 200 or more killed, and about 600 wounded. In considering these and other engagements with the Arabs it is necessary to bear in mind their extraordinary mobility. When mounted they could always outpace our cavalry, and even when dismounted their fleetness of foot more than enabled them to hold their own with our horses. This was shown by the experience of an Indian cavalry officer who was cut off in an action in the desert. He was mounted on a polo pony which had been a reserve mount for the International polo match with the U.S.A., but he found that the Arabs on foot could go faster than he could; and it was only the intervention of some British artillery that enabled him to make good his escape.[1] Ghadhban had offered a reward of several gold pieces for every British or Indian head brought in to him, and those of our wounded who fell into Arab hands were at once killed. One such was a British officer, who, as an Arab eye-witness related to me some days later, was surrounded by Arabs as he lay wounded and unarmed on the ground. When they indicated to him that he must prepare to have his throat cut, he motioned to them to wait while he took off his boots. Puzzled, and thinking that it was perhaps incumbent on the British to bare their feet before saying their prayers, the Arabs waited. Then, with unerring aim, *deliberata morte ferocior*, he threw his boots at the faces of his foes, who closed in on him. It is a deed that deserves immortality no less than that of the refusal of the private of the Buffs to make obeisance to the mandarin, which Doyle has immortalized.

Unsatisfactory as was the issue of the action, the heavy losses inflicted on Ghadhban's Arabs deterred them from trying conclusions afresh with us, and the situation in 'Arabistan, though still fraught with dangerous possibilities, became slightly easier. Its effect on the home front was decisive:[2] Lord Crewe informed the Viceroy that His Majesty's Government definitely ordered the strengthening of General

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[1] *O.H.* i, 185.

[2] The idea of landing at Alexandretta was at this time again being urged by high authority at home as a movement complementary to the Mesopotamia campaign. The possibility of landing in force at Smyrna, where we had already been operating, was also being considered: see Corbett, vol. ii, and Younghusband, *Forty Years*, p. 279.

Barrett's force at once, and that both he and the Commander-in-Chief were thereby relieved of responsibility for the consequences in India. It was decided forthwith to dispatch further reinforcements from Bombay, and by 25th March most of them had arrived, under the command of Major-General Gorringe. By the time they had reached Basra the effect of General Robinson's action had begun to wear off, and the Chʿab and Bawi were again restive, whilst the people of Ram Hormuz, a predominantly Bakhtiari town, were openly in arms against us. A proclamation[1] was issued by Sir Percy Cox, to the Shaikhs and tribesmen of the Chʿab, warning them to remain neutral. 'Be not deceived,' the proclamation concluded; 'if you are so misguided as to leave your villages and join the enemies of the British Government in spite of the neutrality of Persia, then the British Government will be driven to treat hostility with hostility, and their arm is long and quick. Take this friendly warning and do not put yourselves in trouble for nothing.'

In the event, the Chʿab were not deceived, and though the Bawi continued in open revolt, our line of communication with Ahwaz by river was never seriously menaced, and the Turkish forces opposite Aminiya made only half-hearted and desultory attacks. The commander had been ordered to march on Mohammerah, but we know from the Turkish authority quoted above that he was prevented by the untrustworthiness of his Arab allies from moving effectively against either Ahwaz or Mohammerah. Desultory actions were fought on 31st March, and on 6th, 11th, and 12th April, but after our victory at Shuʿaiba the Turkish effort on this flank was not renewed.

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At this juncture we may conveniently leave our right flank, and consider the course of our left wing in Arabia.

Before war had been declared by Turkey, Captain Shakespear was dispatched from England, with instructions to get into touch with Ibn Saʿud with a view to securing Arab good-will in the event of war with Turkey. He had formerly been Political Agent at Kuwait, had travelled extensively in Arabia, and knew Ibn Saʿud well. Meanwhile Ibn Saʿud was informed through the Shaikh of Kuwait, the redoubtable Mubarak ibn Sabah,[2] that the Germans were working to alienate Turkey from Great Britain, and that it was hoped that he and the Shaikh of Kuwait would use their influence to maintain peace in Arabia.

In a letter dated 4th January, the last received from him, Captain Shakespear reported that the *jihad* was receiving no support in

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[1] Printed in full in Appendix I.

[2] He died in November 1915 and was succeeded by his son Jabir, who died in 1916, giving place to another son of Mubarak, Salim, of stronger character but narrower vision, who in turn died in February 1921, and was succeeded by Shaikh Hamud, son of Jabir.

Capt. W. H. I. SHAKESPEAR, C.I.E.
Indian Political Dept.
Killed in action in Arabia, Jan. 1915

southern Najd: on the contrary there had been unaffected rejoicing in Central Arabia on our capture of Basra and Qurna. Ibn Saʿud was, as he had already assured Sir Percy Cox, entirely on our side and desired nothing better than the liberation of Basra and its severance from Turkey. He desired a definite treaty[1] with Great Britain, the conclusion of which would enable him to burn his boats.

A few days later the rivalry between Ibn Saʿud of Najd and Ibn Rashid of Haïl culminated in a pitched battle. Shakespear was wounded by a chance bullet and killed by Ibn Rashid's swordsmen in the mellay that followed. In him I lost a good friend, and the Department an officer of rare distinction and ability. The circumstances of his death were explained by Ibn Saʿud in one of those laconic but dignified and vivid letters that he knows so well how to write.

> 'We fought against Ibn Rashid at Artawi and a great battle followed: alas that our cordial friend and rare well-wisher was hit from a distance and died. We had pressed him to leave us before the fight, but he insisted on being present, saying, "My orders are to be with you. To leave would be contrary to my honour and to my orders. I must certainly remain." Pray inform H.M.'s Government of my sorrow.'[2]

Shakespear will long be remembered in the Gulf: a good mechanic, he spent three months of his last leave 'going through the shops'; a competent sailor, he could sail any type of craft, and would navigate his own little launch in any storm. I was once on board the slow mail from Kuwait to Bushire in a stiff *shamal* when we met him in his launch going in the opposite direction, rolling alarmingly. Up ran the signals on his foremast: 'Do you require assistance?' I thought at first that he had sent the wrong signal, but the Master knew the man he was dealing with and sent an appropriate reply. Such men are the salt of the earth, and of any Service; pedants and pundits have their uses—every Service breeds a few—but their place is not yet in Arabia.[3]

The issue of the battle in which Shakespear met his death was doubtful, but it certainly left Ibn Saʿud in a worse position than before; for the next twelve months his attention was occupied by the revolt of the ʿAjman, and it might have gone ill with him but for the financial and moral support of the aged Mubarak, 'sitting', as Lovat Fraser says, 'in his high chamber, gazing seaward with inscrutable eyes, with the face of Richelieu and something of Richelieu's ambition yet unquenched within him'. So long as Arabs can select for high office in Arabia men like Mubarak and Ibn Saʿud, we may regard their future with confidence and their independence as assured. But such men are rare.

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[1] In October 1916 a treaty was concluded. See Appendix I.

[2] See note by Sir Percy Cox (Bell, ii. 509) and Philby, i. 385.

[3] For a full description of Captain Shakespear's previous travels, see Carruthers, *Geog. Journal*, lix, 1922.

The scope of this book necessarily excludes more than a passing reference to the affairs of Central Arabia, which are dealt with amply, if sometimes one-sidedly, by Mr. Philby in *The Heart of Arabia* and *Arabia of the Wahabis*. Upon the main currents of the war in Mesopotamia events in this region had little effect, though the responsibility of advising H.M.'s Government on British policy in Central Arabia proved, throughout the period covered by this work, a heavy addition to the Civil Commissioner's burdens. It was the more difficult for the fact that letters from Baghdad to Najd or vice versa seldom took less than six weeks, and telegrams a month.

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It is here necessary to revert to Basra and to the Viceroy's visit. This did not, on the whole, lead to satisfactory results. The *Official History* is at pains to record that he visited the hospitals and found 'conditions good, and the men happy and comfortable', adding that there had only been twenty-five deaths from disease in the $2\frac{3}{4}$ months they had been in the country. Bearing in mind that a hospital ship (the s.s. *Varela*) was constantly running between Bombay and Basra (a five-day trip) and that no serious action had been fought since the occupation of Basra, and remembering that the force was comprised of seasoned troops, it is not surprising that Lord Hardinge's impressions were favourable—unduly so, in fact, for he was led thereby to the conclusion that no reinforcements were essential for the moment. The dispatch of the infantry brigade that was held in readiness for Basra was cancelled by his direct orders, conveyed by telegram to the Commander-in-Chief. To these optimistic views he clung long after any sort of justification had ceased to exist. India had, of course, its own grave troubles at this moment, and Mesopotamia was only one and perhaps not the most serious of Indian military responsibilities. His speech to the British Chamber of Commerce, so far as it dealt with the future, was so non-committal as to weaken the effect of previous proclamations, though he paid a welcome and well-deserved tribute to the mercantile community and made a presentation of plate to two individuals in recognition of 'the unremitting and cordial assistance you have rendered to the Expeditionary Force. You have placed your resources, your staffs, and your houses at its disposal and given every help you could.' On the other hand, the fact that the Viceroy, burdened as he was with innumerable cares, had undertaken the long journey to Basra to make personal contact with those on the spot was highly appreciated. It is to be regretted that his example was not followed by the

Commander-in-Chief in India or any of his principal staff officers for more than two years.

Scarcely was the Viceroy's face turned towards India when, as already explained, the situation in ʿArabistan began to cause anxiety. On the Shatt-al-ʿArab the water-level began to rise, driving both our troops and the Turks out of their positions at Qurna; the desert between Basra and Shuʿaiba was inundated to a depth of three feet for a distance of five miles, making the track impassable for any loaded animals except mules and horses, and very difficult for carts or artillery even with double teams. A *bellam* Transport Corps was organized in March 1915 to ferry supplies between Basra and Zubair across the inundations. The *bellams*, long heavy canoes carrying about half a ton, were manned by local Arabs, with one British or Indian soldier as supercargo. They did good work, though the non-combatant spirit was sometimes manifest, especially when the guns could be heard. Turkish troops were meanwhile pouring down the Euphrates, and we had to reinforce Shuʿaiba from Qurna: our transport difficulties were acute enough, but less so than those of the Turks, thanks in large measure to the effective work of the Euphrates Blockade Force, which operated in the marshes west and north-west of Qurmat ʿAli, in old stern-wheelers, tugs, and barges, shelling the Turkish Camp at Nukhaila and forcing the Turks to abandon the use of river craft for the last twenty miles of their communication. Our force, consisting of 14,400 men and 40 guns, was dispersed on three fronts, but we had good communication by water between Qurna, Basra, and Ahwaz, whereas for practical purposes no sort of communication existed between the Turkish forces at Shuʿaiba, Qurna, and Ahwaz. They were, however, in superior strength both at Shuʿaiba and Ahwaz. If the Arab contingents be added, the numbers at Shuʿaiba were about 7,600 Turks and 18,000 Arabs, with 21 guns, and at Ahwaz 1,500 Turks, 3,000 Arabs, and 2 guns (according to Turkish accounts), or a grand total of 8,000 men according to our General Staff estimate on 31st March.

It had been decided during March, in circumstances fully detailed in the *Official History*, to send reinforcements to Mesopotamia. The Government of India also resolved to organize the force as an Army Corps and to supersede Lieut.-Gen. Sir Arthur Barrett by a more senior officer, General Sir J. E. Nixon, who with additional staff arrived at Basra on 9th April. General Barrett returned to India and took over the scarcely less arduous duties of the Northern Army. Temperamentally Sir John Nixon and Sir Arthur Barrett were poles apart, and there can be little doubt that of the two Sir Arthur Barrett was better suited to the Mesopotamian problem than his successor. Sir John Nixon revelled in responsibility—'we have no evidence to show', recorded the Mesopotamia Commission, 'that a conference of any kind took place before he informed the Viceroy that he could open the road to Baghdad'. Sir Arthur Barrett, too, could take responsibility, but he was cautious in temper, patient in counsel, quick in action only after principles had been settled. He continued to serve in India until 1920, his last command being the N.W. Frontier Force, and he died a Field Marshal in October 1926. In politics a professed Radical, given to study and the pursuit of botany rather than to sport, of fine presence and commanding stature, it is no disparagement of his successor in Mesopotamia to say that had he retained the command many things would have been done differently. The Mesopotamia Commission, in considering the causes of subsequent disasters, noted his foresight in pressing for a light railway to Nasiriya (see Ch. XI).

By the time General Nixon arrived the stage was ready set for the first and most vital of our battles on this front; six days later, on 12th April, the Turks started to attack our position at Shuʿaiba; by dawn on the 15th, after seventy-two hours of almost continuous fighting, victory remained with us.[1] The battle of Shuʿaiba was a true encounter-battle which developed fortuitously rather than by plan, in which every arm of the army played its part; and the conduct of the units of the Indian Army, which formed a large majority of the total force, would have rejoiced Wellington's heart. We had, of course, no aircraft; this battle was indeed probably the last great combat to take place without previous aerial reconnaissance. The Naval units on the right flank were unable to help in the battle, but they harassed the retreat.

Throughout the three days' fighting the British force remained on the defensive: there was no pursuit, and the Turks were able to remove all their guns. Pursuit by our infantry was out of the question, for the available transport was totally insufficient, but we had a Cavalry Brigade and a Battery of Horse Artillery. The cavalry were used on

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[1] Major G. G. M. Wheeler of the 7th Hariana Lancers was posthumously awarded the V.C. for gallantry in this action, described in the London *Gazette* of 1st Sept. 1915 as follows:

'On the 12th April, 1915, Major Wheeler asked permission to take out his squadron and attempt to capture a flag, which was the centre-point of a group of the enemy who were firing on one of our picquets. He advanced and attacked the enemy's infantry with the lance, doing considerable execution among them. He then retired while the enemy swarmed out of hidden ground and formed an excellent target to our Royal Horse Artillery guns.

'On the 13th April, 1915, Major Wheeler led his squadron to the attack of the 'North Mound'. He was seen far ahead of his men riding single-handed straight for the enemy's standards.

'This gallant officer was killed on the Mound.'

LIEUT.-COL. GERALD E. LEACHMAN
C.I.E., D.S.O.
The Royal Sussex Regiment
Killed 14*th August* 1920

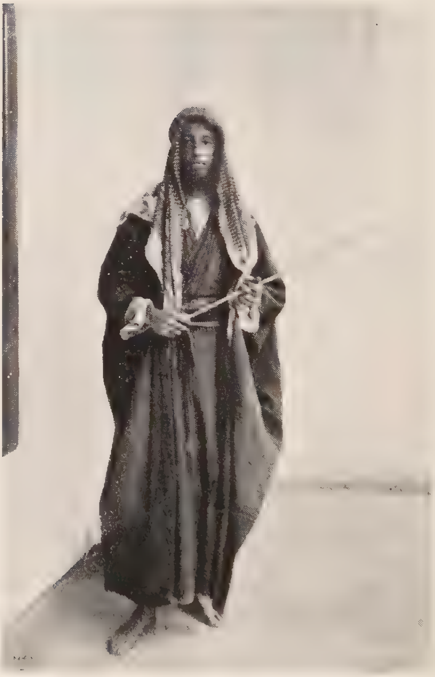

Photo taken outside the Residency at Baghdad in 1912 on his return from his travels in Arabia.

our right flank, where they had no room to manœuvre, for they could not pass round the Turks' left because of the floods. Had they been used, with the R.H.A. battery, on our left flank their action might have been decisive during its battle, and they might have annihilated or captured the whole Turkish force during its retreat: they knew the ground well from frequent reconnaissances in March and April, and they showed enterprise in their operations on the right flank.

Our casualties in the three days' fighting amounted to 1,257, those of the Turks about double this number, in addition to which we took about 800 prisoners and captured 2 mountain guns.

Captain (afterwards Lt.-Col.) G. E. Leachman, of the Royal Sussex Regiment, an experienced traveller in Arabia, and a soldier who had seen service in more than one campaign, had arrived in February, and was attached to the Divisional Head-quarters at Shuʿaiba as Political Officer. He rendered signal services during this battle, and by maintaining the closest touch through Zubair with his desert friends, obtained the latest information regarding enemy activities. I shall have more to say of him hereafter.

The complete defeat of the Turks at Shuʿaiba did much to relieve the fears of those Arabs, a majority of the population, who were well disposed to us; but it was not wholly welcome to the lower classes, who at first recoiled from our strange ways and strange costumes—the bare knees of our troops excited at first peculiar surprise and indeed resentment. I was amongst the crowd who watched the arrival at the Zubair gate of the first batch of Turkish prisoners of war. Their numbers were so disproportionate to the escort of British troops, themselves scarcely less haggard in their appearance and ragged in their dress than their captives, that at first the rumour spread that the Turks were entering the town in triumph, and a shrill cry of joy arose. A Turkish sergeant, mistaking the intent of this *tahlil*, and stung to the quick, shouted a sentence of reproach at the crowd: they were thenceforth silent, except for the cry of one of a group of Arab women on a house-top: 'Lord, how long shall the ungodly: how long shall the ungodly triumph?' A hundred faces were turned to her, and a wail went up that was echoed for a moment from house-top to house-top: then silence again, and discretion. We afterwards learned that an Address of Welcome had been prepared in readiness for presentation to Sulaiman ʿAskari. It was doubtless consigned to the flames that night on some domestic hearth.

On our right flank, or rather behind it, in the neighbourhood of Bushire, there was evidence of unrest. Mention has already been made of the arrival of Herr Wassmuss in Khuzistan on his way to Fars: his passage had not passed unnoticed, and an attempt was made to capture him as he passed along the coast behind Bandar Rig, in the district of Haiat Daud. The officer entrusted with this task was Captain Noel of the Indian Political Department, a man who combined boundless energy and great physical endurance with a thorough knowledge of the Persian language and of tribal ways. After a series of forced marches, he succeeded in capturing the whole party, but during the night the Persian tribal guard set to watch over the camp slept, as is their custom, and Wassmuss escaped. The remainder of the party were sent to an internment camp in India, whither had already been dispatched Herr Listemann, whose actively hostile demeanour, as German Consul at Bushire, though in no way discreditable to him personally, had forced us to remove him. Both in his papers and those of Herr Wassmuss were found ample proofs of overt acts, and plans wholly inconsistent with the maintenance of Persian neutrality: Wassmuss carried, in addition to a large sum in sovereigns, a number of pamphlets in Persian, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu for the consumption of Indian troops. The pamphlets and broadsheets were poor stuff, and of themselves would have accomplished little or nothing, but Wassmuss's fiery energy and his money worked wonders. The tribes of Tangistan and in the hinterland of Bushire had been for some years virtually out of control, and were well armed. Twice in the ten years preceding the war they had seized the town of Bushire itself; active participants in the arms traffic, they nursed the keenest resentment against the activities of the Royal Navy, who since 1910 had been actively engaged, with the approval and support of the Persian Government, in suppressing the traffic. The train was laid, and only a spark was needed to set it alight. Wassmuss started the conflagration; and with the active assistance of the Swedish officers of the Persian Gendarmerie, and of some Persian officials, stirred up the tribes and others to attack the British Consulates at Shiraz and Bushire.[1] With events in Shiraz and in the interior of Persia this work is, however, not concerned; they have been fully recounted by Sir Percy Sykes, who landed at Bandar Abbas in 1916 with a small number of British and Indian troops. He raised a body of 11,000 Persians to take the place of the Gendarmerie, the greater part of which had for all practical purposes joined the Germans or had dispersed owing to lack of pay. The force thus created, which came to be known as the South Persia Rifles, was designed solely for the restoration of law and order and for the maintenance of Persian neutrality in South Persia; in the North, the strength of the

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[1] See F. Tuohy, *The Crater of Mars*, p. 181, and *The Secret Corps*, p. 200. The account given of the exploits of Herr Wassmuss is almost wholly legendary, especially the references to 'English girl captives'.

Cossack Brigade was to be raised under Russian auspices to the same figure and to be maintained for the duration of the war. The presence in Persia of these forces created, perhaps, more problems than it solved, but it served to prevent Persia from joining the Central Powers and the Germans from exercising commanding influence in Afghanistan and on the North-west Frontier of India.

By the middle of March the situation at Bushire became acute; it seemed likely that it might be necessary to divert troops from Mesopotamia for the protection of Bushire, and a battalion of Indian Infantry was sent there shortly after the battle of Shuʿaiba. In June General Nixon's responsibilities were enlarged to include Bushire, and its defences were reinforced by two captured Turkish guns. The garrison was eventually expanded into a Brigade, which, under General Brooking, fought a series of actions against the Tangistani tribes; they were also engaged by a landing party of the Royal Navy. These events though not germane to our story added to the constant anxieties of the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia and his political advisers.

CHAPTER III[1]

OPERATIONS IN KHUZISTAN AND THE OCCUPATION OF ʿAMARA

> 'It is obvious, that if an army throws away all its cannon, equipments, and baggage, and everything which can strengthen it, and can enable it to act together as a body; and abandons all those who are entitled to its protection, but add to its weight and impede its progress; it must be able to march by roads through which it cannot be followed, with any prospect of being overtaken, by an army which has not made the same sacrifice.' DUKE OF WELLINGTON, 18*th* May 1809.

Sir John Nixon's orders. Advance up Tigris sanctioned. From Ahwaz to Karkha River. Crossing of Karkha. Destruction of Khafajiya. Advance on ʿAmara. At Bisaitin. Townshend's advance up the Tigris. 'Townshend's regatta.' Capture of ʿAmara.

THE battle of Shuʿaiba having been won, Sir John Nixon was free to develop plans for giving effect to his instructions, which were as follows:

I. Your force is intended to retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia, comprising the Basra wilayat and including all outlets to the sea, and such portions of neighbouring territories as may affect your operations.

II. So far as you may find feasible, without prejudicing your main operations, you should endeavour to secure the safety of the oil-fields, pipe-line, and refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

III. After acquainting yourself with the situation on the spot, you will submit:

  i. a plan for the effective occupation of the Basra wilayat.
  ii. a plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

IV. In all operations you will respect the neutrality of Persia, so far as military and political exigencies permit.

He was also to submit reports on the animal transport required, the use of a light railway, armoured motor-cars, motor transport, and aircraft, and the adequacy and suitability of certain river craft then *en route* to Mesopotamia. Copies of these instructions were *posted* to the India Office by mail, arriving on 2nd May.

Operations on the Tigris towards ʿAmara were entrusted to Major-General Townshend, who took over command of the 6th Division on 22nd April; those in Khuzistan to Major-General Gorringe, who commanded the 12th Division. I will deal first with the latter operations, the importance of which was underlined by telegrams from the India Office stating that the Admiralty was most anxious for the early repair of the pipe-line, as 'the oil question was becoming serious'—a tone very different from that adopted by the First Lord of the Admiralty six months earlier. From this time onwards the Admiralty emphasized in all its correspondence with the India Office the vital importance of maintaining the fields, pipe-lines, and refinery in safety and efficiency. There was, however, another aspect of the contemplated operations in Khuzistan, namely the probable effect upon the Turks on the Tigris, whose rear General Gorringe, if he were successful, would be in a position to threaten. This possibility had scarcely been considered by Sir John Nixon, as all available information[1] indicated that access to 'Amara from the Karkha would be barred by floods, but it doubtless had some effect upon the Turks. To send a whole division to Ahwaz at this juncture was, however, quite unnecessary; a regiment of cavalry would have sufficed, and at this period the available cavalry could be used nowhere else with effect.

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, Candler, Townshend, *Naval Review*, vol. iii. 'H.B.R.' 'Memory of a side-Show', *Army Quarterly* 1921.

General Gorringe's force, consisting of 6 squadrons of cavalry,[2] 17 guns, 6 infantry battalions, and a bridging train, was concentrated partly by land and partly by river at a point on the right bank of the Karun some 14 miles above Mohammerah, whence it marched to Saba', where it was joined by the rest of the troops from Basra. Its transport consisted for the most part of some 900 mules, borrowed from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

By this time the Turkish force opposite Ahwaz under Muhammad Pasha Daghistani was in full retreat; the Bani Lam had scattered; the Bani Turuf had returned to their homes in the Karkha marshes and were endeavouring to negotiate with us; the Bawi Arabs on the left bank were bombastically offering to guarantee the safety of the caravan routes and the pipe-line; the political barometer was moving rapidly to 'set fair'. At this juncture I was appointed Political Officer to General Gorringe and left at once with an Arab orderly riding a spare horse, which also carried such kit as I required. After a short talk with the British Consul, Major Trevor (who was a fortnight later appointed to Bushire, *vice* Major Knox, and relieved by Lt.-Col. Kennion of the Indian Political Department), I rode off to join General Gorringe opposite Braika on the evening of the 30th—too late, alas, to prevent, as perhaps might have been possible, an unfortunate incident which had occurred the previous day, involving the death at the hands of Arabs of Major Anderson of the 33rd Cavalry, in the course of a reconnaissance towards the old bed of the Karkha.

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[1] This fact in no way reflects upon the Intelligence Branch. They had been informed by the present writer that the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission who were in camp on the Dawairij in the first week of March 1914 had been quite unable to communicate with 'Amara owing to floods. As the Commission included representatives of the Turkish Government who were accompanied by local officials, this information seemed, and probably was, reliable, though it turned out to be inapplicable to the month of May 1915. For an account of the work of the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission see Hubbard, and Ryder.

[2] Including the 33rd Cavalry, which had fought as the 3rd Cavalry under Outram during the Anglo-Persian war of 1857 near Bushire at Khushab where on 8th February one of their officers, Lieutenant J. K. Malcolmson, had earned the Victoria Cross. (London *Gazette*, 3rd August 1860).

The *Official History* states that the maps of Khuzistan were inaccurate and misleading and that before all ground operations there, at this period, preliminary ground reconnaissance was a necessity. It is true that the maps issued to the troops were misleading, but the material[1] for maps of exceptional accuracy on the scale of one inch to the mile was available in the archives of the Government of India, in the Residency at Bushire, and in the Consulates at Mohammerah and Ahwaz. I myself, moreover, had traversed this particular area repeatedly during 1909–10 and again with the Frontier Commission in 1914 and could have given precise information, having accompanied Sir W. Willcocks of Egyptian and Mesopotamian fame to the Karkha in May 1909, and spent some weeks in July and August 1909 in making an accurate map of the area south of Illa, with detailed levels. These maps were likewise available, but had never been made use of by Army Headquarters at Simla, whilst the secrecy that very properly shrouded the intentions of the G.O.C. Basra was such that it did not become evident, until too late, that these sources of information were not available to them. References to these surveys were actually made in the official 'Military Report on S.W. Persia' which I had prepared for Army Headquarters in 1909, whilst Acting Consul at Mohammerah. Moreover, the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission had been using, almost daily, copies made for us by the Survey of India of one inch to the mile maps of considerable accuracy dating from 1850, prepared by British surveyors for a previous frontier Commission; I knew what a vast amount of labour had been expended, not unfruitfully, on the compilation of a map of Arabia and the Persian Gulf from every possible source during the period immediately preceding the war.[2] It never occurred to me, until too late, that all this valuable material had been overlooked or ignored,

[1] A large-scale survey of the country on both banks of the Karun south of Ahwaz, prepared by Major W. R. Morton, R.E., who with the approval of the Persian Government was deputed by the P.W.D. India in 1906 to examine prospects of irrigation in S. 'Arabistan; supplemented by a one-inch survey made by Mr. G. B. Scott of the Survey of India in 1911 for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

[2] See Fraser Hunter, 'Reminiscences of the Map of Arabia and the Persian Gulf', *Geog. Journal*, December 1919.

presumably because it could not be incorporated in a map intended for 'Official use only', being classified as 'Confidential'.

Immediately on my arrival I reported myself to Brigadier-General Melliss, V.C., who satisfied himself as to my knowledge of the country before us. He afterwards attained fame as perhaps the best fighting man of all Brigade Commanders in Mesopotamia. On the following day, 1st May, I acted as guide to a column, consisting of a Brigade of cavalry, infantry, and a battery of artillery, sent out to establish an advance depot on the old bed of the Karkha, known to Arabs as 'Shatt al Aʿma'. As I rode ahead with a troop of cavalry under Captain Meiklejohn we saw Anderson's body lying just off our track. Dismounting, I covered it with the cotton sheet that constituted my bedding (for the weather was getting hot), and it was buried with honour before the column had passed. We struck the old bed of the Karkha at the spot I was making for, but it was dry; that it contained water a little further west I was sure, but it was an anxious moment, and there was general relief when a patrol galloped back to say that sweet water in abundance was in the bed half a mile farther on. Here the force remained for a week, then moved some five miles up-stream to Illa, where preparations were made to cross the river. The *Official History* (p. 227) emphasizes the need for reconnaissance to ascertain what place was best suited for this purpose. It was, however, fairly clear from the first that the river could be safely crossed here and nowhere else, for the point had, as the wheel-tracks showed, been selected by the Turks for their passage; above were the rapids of Sinn al ʿAbbas, and below, at the elbow bend near Kut Saiyid ʿAli, where there was an Arab ferry in time of peace, the stream widened rapidly. The actual breadth was some 250 yards, and the banks were fairly steep on either side. The melting snows of Luristan had swollen the current, but as no rain had fallen for some days in the upper reaches the river was by no means in full flood, or it would have been impassable. I had my first interview with General Gorringe on 2nd May and was greatly impressed with his forceful personality. He had seen much service in Egypt, at the War Office, and in India as a Royal Engineer. I remained on his staff till some months after the capture of Nasiriya later in the year. To work with him and his staff—with one of whom, Captain (now Lt.-Col.) Dent of the Intelligence Branch I was to be in close and continuous touch for ten years—was a real, if sometimes a fearful joy. At my first interview with him I mentioned that I was accustomed to swimming horses across rivers in Persia: the evening of our arrival at Illa I found myself in orders 'to take charge of mule-swimming operations', a novel task for a Political Officer. I was luckily well equipped for the purpose; not only was I riding an Arab mare which was well accustomed to swim rivers, but had brought with me three *ghulams* of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, one of whom was mounted on a mare. At daybreak a batch of 20 or 30 mules was collected at a suitable spot and urged by shouting sepoys into the water behind my mare, which I had ridden into the water and then guided across the ice-cold stream, keeping her head up-stream by splashing water at her face. Luckily the mules followed, and the first detachment got safely over; the second attempt was less successful, for a canvas boat loaded with sepoys was swept down by the current into the midst of us before we were half-way across, and the astonished mules endeavoured as earnestly to enter the boat as did the sepoys to push them away. A ridiculous sight, but nearly my undoing, for the mules got round the mare and trampled me under water, scoring my back heavily with their fore-feet. After this the men of the 66th and 76th Punjabis, familiar with the five rivers of their native country, took charge of mule-swimming operations as well as of the boats. The cavalry and artillery followed suit, and eventually the whole force got over with, if my memory serves me, only two deaths from drowning. The guns and stores took longer, as it proved no easy matter to build a flying bridge.[1] I had, however, once more to swim the Karkha two miles higher up, in the endeavour to meet General Gorringe's keen desire to find an alternative and if possible easier crossing. The river at this point was smooth, but there was a strong under-current, which carried me down-stream almost helpless for over a mile before reaching the other bank. The experiment was not repeated.

Meanwhile it was getting hot, and the troops, especially the British units, were suffering. We were not yet worried by flies, and the nights were cool, but scorpions abounded, and one night a big snake, afterwards identified as of a very poisonous type, crawled over me as I lay down in the bivouac tent of Lieutenant A. C. Sykes, who commanded the Wireless Detachment. We turned on a torch, and found it curled up in the semicircular end of the tent, on Sykes's revolver. Hastily borrowing the weapon of a neighbour we shot it and hung it next morning outside the Staff Mess Tent, a trophy and a warning.

At last, on the evening of the 13th, supported by a column under General Lean on the left bank, we made a forward move towards Khafajiya. I was detailed as guide to the column, a responsible task, for though I had been in the neighbourhood with the Frontier Commission during the previous year and had ridden and shot over it in earlier years, I did not know it as intimately as the district behind us.

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[1] The Turks had used *bellams* lashed in pairs, but had removed all available craft in their retreat.

I remembered, however, that there was a gap in the range of low hills (Jabal Mishdakh) immediately north-east of Khafajiya, and that a caravan track running north led through it. I remembered, too, that caravans halted at the foot of the hills close to the gap, so that it should be possible to identify the ground by smell, if in no other way. We reached the appointed rendezvous without mishap in six hours, assisted not a little by the fact that the detachment of Gurkhas under Captain Exham, which accompanied me at the head of the column, actually found and followed the Turkish gun-tracks, though the indentation they had made in the hard alluvial soil was not more than a quarter of an inch deep. The next three days were spent in punishing the Bani Turuf tribesmen at Khafajiya; we were using a sledge-hammer to crush a nut—an unsatisfactory and unnecessary operation and not as fatal to the nut as might be supposed. General Lean's column on the left bank had the heaviest task, and suffered more from the climate than from the enemy. We had the artillery with us on the right bank, and by using star shells soon set fire to the reed huts, burning alive a number of unfortunate horses and buffalo abandoned by their owners. Nevertheless, the Bani Turuf put up a remarkably good fight against greatly superior numbers and an overwhelming concentration of artillery and machine guns. They do not, however, deserve sympathy, even at this distant date: they had killed all our wounded,[1] and had gratuitously joined hands with the Turks against us. It may be doubted, however, whether the allegations of treachery made against them in the *Official History* (i. 226, 230) are justified. The case of the Bani Turuf in which I was personally involved was almost certainly a misunderstanding—the act of terrified men who for the first time had been under heavy artillery fire. The attack on Major Anderson's patrol was not an act of treachery: he was parleying with a Shaikh, who was almost certainly anxious to avoid hostilities but was, as is often the case, unable to control his followers.

I had been the guest of Shaikhs 'Asi and 'Aufi at Khafajiya in 1911, and again in 1914, in connection with the frontier question; so that ample as was the justification and clear as was my duty it was not without inward misery that I saw the blazing village and the dead bodies of cheerful scoundrels whom I had known in earlier years. I was making use of information I had acquired, for very different purposes, in the five strenuous years I had spent in the country, and I was witnessing the slaughter of men whom I had come to regard as friends. I had swum the river at the first opportunity in the hope of parleying with the survivors and paving the way for a surrender, and joined a group of men of the 76th Punjabis who had surrounded a strongly built mud-house or fort. An officer pointed to a small white flag on a bamboo pole hung over it: it had been there for some time, he said. It had probably been there for a year—for a white flag is commonly hung out to designate the house of a headman or *ʽalim* (religious teacher). Firing had ceased, and it seemed possible that surrender was contemplated. I went forward a few yards (we were already within hail), and called on the men to come out, offering them *hazz o bakht* (safe-conduct). I could see no one through the tiny windows, but managed to make myself heard and began to parley, though without result: either they or their friends in a reed hut on a flank opened fire on me, and I took refuge in a ditch. The house was afterwards set on fire and stormed by the 76th Punjabis, who killed most of the occupants but took eleven prisoners: short, ragged men with long plaited hair, armed with rusty Martinis, they formed a pathetic little group as they sat on the ground, surrounded by Punjabis, whose bayonets still dripped with the blood of their fellows. I recognized one of them, Shaikh ʽAsi's coffee-man. 'O Mister Wilson,' said he, 'why have you brought this on us? It is you who have led these men here. Was it for this that you ate our bread and wandered in our marshes and made maps? Treachery, treachery, was in your heart and lies on your lips, and now the blood of our brothers is on your head. May God pardon you!' It was useless to argue. In such cases there are usually two points of view.

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[1] That they had mutilated them, as stated (*O.H.*, p. 228), is not, I believe, true, unless the reference is to the fact that they cut off the heads in order to secure a reward from Shaikh Ghadhban. Torture of an enemy, even an infidel, is not an Arab custom, though it was not unknown to the Turks.

In this engagement we lost fifteen killed; the Arabs probably ten times as many, with all their grain and 1,000 head of cattle.

The lesson was salutary, not so much to the Bani Turuf who, to judge from subsequent experience, resemble the Bourbons, but to the tribes on the Tigris below ʽAmara. They could hear our artillery, and they learned of the punishment inflicted by the column. The complete absence of Arab opposition on the Tigris a fortnight later was doubtless due in some measure to the destruction of Khafajiya.[1] Nor was the lesson soon forgotten: at no time during or after the campaign had we any trouble whatever with the Al Bu Muhammad tribes on the Tigris below ʽAmara.

A day later I was detailed to accompany a cavalry reconnaissance westwards towards Umm Chir. We left camp at Bisaitin, to which place we had advanced from Khafajiya and went forward, more slowly than I liked, for about ten miles. The main body then halted and I was sent ahead with six *sowars* under Lieutenant Hunt, to get within sight, if possible, of the Turkish camp. A thousand yards to the left were the reedy marshes of the Karkha, with Arab villages and hamlets here and there; at the same distance to the right, a tangle of low hills of soft sandstone, with sand dunes and tamarisk jungle further to the north. We pushed ahead about six miles and from the summit of a rocky hill saw Umm Chir, but no sign of the retreating Turks. Having done what we set out to do we turned our horses' heads towards home. We had gone about a mile when I saw a band of two or three hundred Arabs running out from the marshes, about half a mile ahead of us; they were spread out in a line and some were making for the hills, obviously intending to cut us off. All were on foot except two men, one an *'alim* with a white turban, the other from his dress and commanding position, ahead of the rest, clearly a shaikh. A moment later I recognized him—it was Shaikh 'Asi himself, wiry, fiery, and indomitable, the idol of his tribe and the *bête noire* of Shaikh Khaz'al and of every other Persian official. He rode ahead, shouting and waving his cloak, the nearest equivalent to a flag of truce in Arab warfare. I too rode a little ahead. 'Inta Wilson?' he shouted—'Are you Wilson?' 'Yes', I replied, 'I am Wilson.' He wheeled round, and shouted something to his men, who at once opened a desultory fire.

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[1] There is no foundation for Candler's statement (i. 243) that we spared the colony of Persian traders and left their homes standing: if any houses were left, it was accidental.

Our best chance was to take to the hills, and for the hills we made. In single file I led the way on my Arab mare, and striking a track made by the wild pig who live by day in the marsh and by night in the hills, followed it closely, for horses can follow the beaten track of pig, but not sheep or goat. We managed to reach the hills just as the Arabs got to the top of the nearest ridge, a hundred yards ahead of us; we spurred on into broken country, trying to keep a ridge between us and our enemies, and eventually succeeded in getting back to the main body with the loss of two horses, whose riders were carried pillion by their more fortunate comrades.

Within a few minutes of our return to Bisaitin I was instructed to requisition supplies for the force there, which was on short rations and those mostly bully beef and biscuit. It seemed a hopeless task. We had just destroyed one village and had a brush with another. Our troops could not safely penetrate the marshes, nor could they have collected supplies, for the grazing-grounds were far away. But the Arabs of Bisaitin were most business-like, and after a few minutes' parley on the bank a Saiyid and an *'alim* came to negotiate in their best style. The people of Khafajiya had been very properly punished, they said; Shaikh 'Asi, curses on his head, was a tyrant, a rebel, and a traitor to Shaikh Khaz'al, bless his heart, and to the Imperial Persian Government, may God prolong its days. They were poor humble folk, confident of the justice of the British Government, and would do all they could to feed us—for cash: the marsh Arab was so stupid that he would do nothing without money. We had none: our small store of coin was on the Karkha, and consisted of rupees, not krans. Finally it was agreed that I should give them my personal I.O.U., payable by Lynch Bros. at Ahwaz or by the *Vakil-i-Mail* at Basra, so that if, God forbid, the Army retired before the holders should visit the towns, the order would still be good. That the ancient and honourable firms of Lynch Brothers at Ahwaz or Gray, Mackenzie & Co.[1] at Basra might also have to retire with us luckily never occurred to them. This arranged, supplies began to come forward—such rations as the Force never had before or since: baskets of dates, *mashhufs* (canoes) loaded with fresh fish, which the Punjabis would not eat, but the British troops relished, ducks by the score, chickens and eggs; later on, sheep and goats arrived by *bellam*. Some aged buffaloes, whose hides were worth more than their carcases, they obligingly killed for us, swiftly and skilfully, surrounded by an admiring crowd, in return for the hides. I heard one Arab address his buffalo, as he tied her up: 'Your death is lawful, my darling, your skin and your flesh shall buy me a rifle, and I will become a man.'

We halted at Bisaitin for some days, in readiness for an advance on 'Amara when required, but owing to shortage of rations part of the force returned to the Karkha. It was a trying time for all: we had practically no tents; the water was not merely brackish but charged with 'Epsom' salts; the heat though dry was severe—had there been any shade, the thermometer would have stood in it at 115° or more—in the sun it rose to 160°. One could not touch metal with bare hands; a tin of cold water left in the sun during the day was too hot to wash in by the afternoon; eggs could be cooked on the sand. There was much sickness, and as many invalids in the ranks as in hospital. On 3rd June we learnt that 'Amara had fallen: on 5th June General Gorringe was ordered to send three battalions, a cavalry regiment, and a field battery to 'Amara, and take back the rest of the force to Ahwaz. Both these movements were unopposed. On the way back a punitive expedition was sent against the tribe supposedly implicated in the attack on Major Anderson. I was not present, but was repeatedly assured on good authority that the actual perpetrators were far away at the time and that the relatively innocent alone suffered.

We left Bisaitin on the 9th and reached 'Amara on the 14th. It was again my privilege to accompany the advanced patrols and to help find the way. This was not difficult, with the Turkish gun-tracks to guide us, but the Bani Lam encamped near our route needed careful

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[1] Later amalgamated as the Mesopotamia-Persia Corporation Ltd.

Photo by Russell

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR G. F. GORRINGE
K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

handling. The nature of the country forced us to move in a column several miles long and incapable of concentrating quickly if attacked. Every Arab camp we passed was full of men armed to the teeth and as suspicious of our intentions as we of theirs: many of their rifles and nearly all ammunition belts were Turkish. Accompanied by two or three *sowars* I visited each camp in turn, inquired for the Shaikh, took coffee, gave assurances and warnings, and occasionally rode back to make sure that all was well. Water was fortunately not a difficulty. We were marching along the northern edge of what is, I believe, the world's greatest marsh, and five men were drowned close to ‘Amara. The water was alive with wild fowl, flamingo in pink clouds here and there, and tracks of pig everywhere could be seen, but for rations we had to rely on what we could carry.

We must now return to the Tigris, the scene during the past four weeks of ‘an amphibious campaign’ (as Lord Crewe termed it in the House of Lords) which had yielded great results. On 11th May Sir John Nixon ordered the 6th Division to push up the river from Qurna and occupy ‘Amara. The operation, which came to be known as ‘Townshend's regatta’, is fully described in General Townshend's book. It was necessary to dislodge the enemy from some sandhills north of Qurna, and as the intervening ground was flooded the attack was carried out in some 370 bellams, holding 10 men each, of which about 100 carried large iron plates as shields. The preliminary arrangements took time, and it was not till the 31st May that the forward move began. It was rapidly carried to a successful conclusion, thanks largely to close naval co-operation, and notable for the appearance for the first time of aeroplanes, of which two had reached Basra a fortnight before. There was a little fighting on the 31st May, but none on the following day, for the Turks had abandoned the offensive and were retreating up-stream as fast as their available craft would carry them. The Turkish gunboat *Marmaris* was set on fire by its crew[1] and lay aground on the right bank five miles above Ezra's tomb, riddled with our shells and abandoned. The Navy, in launches and tug-boats, armoured and unarmoured, having first cleared the river of German-made and German laid mines, pursued the Turks hotly, capturing *mahaila* after *mahaila* full of Turkish troops, and several steamers loaded with military stores. The Senior Naval Officer, Captain W. Nunn, transferred his pennant to the *Comet*,[2] and accompanied by General Townshend and Sir Percy Cox pushed on beyond Qal'at Salih, where three wounded Germans were found in a Field Ambulance. Two others were killed by Arabs whilst trying to escape. There was no sign of Arab hostility, but on the contrary every indication of friendliness, thanks to the example of Khafajiya.

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[1] *O. H.*, p. 260, says that it was on fire from British shell-fire, but see Cato, p. 41. Both her guns and her magazines were intact.

[2] The *Comet*, which had been employed in March on the Karun at Ahwaz, was the successor of a dispatch-boat of the same name which took troops to Ahwaz during the Anglo-Persian war in March 1857: see Hunt.

Twelve miles from 'Amara General Townshend thought of halting, for it seemed incredible that the Turks should make no attempt to defend the town. He was persuaded by Captain Nunn to continue the chase, and was rewarded shortly afterwards by news from the aeroplanes that the Turks were still on the run and that all that remained of Muhammad Pasha Daghistani's force was three weak battalions east of 'Amara, and probably some in the town. The armed launch *Shaitan* under Lieutenant Mark Singleton, to which Sir Percy Cox had moved, pursued the Turkish steamers past 'Amara through the boat-bridge which had just been opened to let pass a Turkish steamer-load of troops. She captured, with her crew of 8 naval ratings, 11 officers and 250 men, all fully armed, and put to flight ten times as many. Two hours later General Townshend's party, consisting of about 30 naval ratings and 12 British soldiers and half-a-dozen officers, arrived and received the surrender of 'Amara from the Civil Governor and a number of Turkish officers. A battalion of the Constantinople Fire Brigade—picked troops—were in the barracks: feeling that we must have overlooked them they sent word that they were ready to surrender. My friend Lieutenant Palmer, R.N., with ten men and an interpreter went to make them prisoners. He found them drawn up under their officers, fully armed. After gravely taking their salute, he marched them to the river bank and thus on to a big lighter which was anchored in mid-stream under our guns. Then, having nothing else to do for the moment, the *Shaitan* started to shell some two thousand Turks on their way to 'Amara from the Ahwaz front. The advance guard surrendered and the rest fled in confusion upstream, but some, in fear of the Bani Lam, returned to surrender to the little handful of men under General Townshend. Night came on, but not our reinforcements, and the garrison, *exigui numero sed bello vivida virtus*, had an anxious time. They had some 600 prisoners on their hands, in the midst of an Arab town of 10,000 inhabitants who were being kept in their place by the warning that they would be shot if seen in the street; luckily the bluff was not called till daybreak, when the Arabs commenced to pillage the town. They were too late, for an hour after daybreak the Norfolks arrived and restored order. Further troops arrived during the day and General Nixon himself arrived that evening (4th June).

We had captured 'Amara, with 17 guns, a large quantity of arms and ammunition, a gunboat, and smaller craft, with nearly 2,000 prisoners, at a cost to ourselves of 4 killed and 21 wounded, the Turkish casualties being about ten times as great. It was war, and it was magnificent: it came, too, at a welcome moment. 'Amara was a good supply centre, and a healthier and drier spot than Basra, from which it was distant by river nearly 200 miles; it was indeed for long the chosen centre for hospitals and the most popular military station in Mesopotamia. The town was quite modern, having been built with comparatively wide streets as recently as 1866: it was well built, with a broad open strip along the left bank of the Tigris just below the point where the Chahala canal takes off a great volume of water for irrigation purposes. 'Amara was, in the words of Sir Beauchamp Duff in September 1915, 'the nodal point of Mesopotamia'. Beyond it, our transport difficulties became greater than those of the Turks. South of 'Amara, Turkish transport difficulties were greater than ours. It was easily defensible, both against Arabs and Turks, and neither showed for some weeks any disposition to approach within a hundred miles.

Small wonder that after these experiences the Generals should feel that they could do anything, and that the troops should feel that with such leaders and such enemies they could go anywhere; hence, perhaps, the over-confidence which characterized our subsequent movements on the Tigris.

CHAPTER IV[1]

THE OCCUPATION OF NASIRIYA

'Any offensive operation. . . must be preceded by a naval superiority on the Lakes. In such countries . . . very thinly peopled, and producing but little food in proportion to their extent, military operations by large bodies are impracticable unless the party carrying them on has the uninterrupted use of a navigable river, or very extensive means of land transport, which such a country can rarely supply.'

DUKE OF WELLINGTON, *22nd Feb.* 1814.

Occupation of Nasiriya sanctioned. Crossing of Hammar Lake. Fighting on ʿAkaika Canal. Predatory habits of Arabs. Advance on Nasiriya. Critical days on Euphrates. Reconnaissance on Majinina canal. Capture of Nasiriya. Civil Government organized.

SIR JOHN NIXON might well have felt that he had accomplished all that the Government of India, from whom, be it always remembered, he received his orders, had desired: the Turks had been defeated at Shuʿaiba, driven back from Ahwaz, and crushed on the Tigris. The oil-fields and pipe-line in Khuzistan were as safe as he could make them; British prestige had been restored in the Persian Gulf; and though the position in Persia was unsatisfactory nothing that he could do in Mesopotamia, short of the capture of Baghdad, could affect it.

It will be noted, however, that in giving Sir John Nixon the instructions quoted in Chapter III, the Government of India, even before the battle of Shuʿaiba, had placed the safety of the oil-fields second, and territorial acquisitions first, and that they regarded, or wished Sir John Nixon to regard, Baghdad as a possible objective.

The reference to the Basra wilayat is particularly significant: its precise extent was probably not known to the Government of India; whether or not Kut (as we shall hereafter term Kut-al-Amara) was within the Basra wilayat was still a matter of doubt. In point of fact the boundary line crosses the Tigris a few miles east of Kut. The wilayat was an administrative unit of no strategic significance.

When Sir John Nixon, with these instructions in mind, asked for more troops his request was refused; in expressing concurrence with this refusal the India Office added that no advance beyond the present theatre of operations (viz. Basra, Qurna, Ahwaz) would be sanctioned, though an advance to ʿAmara with a view to the greater safety of the pipe-line might be supported.

'Our present position', the message ended, 'is strategically sound, and we cannot, at present, afford to take risks by extending it unduly. We must play a safe game in Mesopotamia.'

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[1] References: *Official History, Critical Study, Naval Review*, vol. iii.

This telegram, the wisdom of which cannot be doubted, was sent on the eve of our first landing in Gallipoli which, with the Suez Canal, constituted the principal theatres of war against Turkey.

But the Government of India's persistence won the day: and when the Secretary of State was asked on 23rd May to concur in an advance to 'Amara, he did so, though he complained at not being told of Sir John Nixon's intention earlier: 'Arrangements for the move in question must have been made some days ago and I consider that General Nixon should have submitted his proposals before the last moment.' General Nixon had been discussing the move with India, on their instructions, for some weeks—yet no attempt was made by the Government of India to enlighten the Secretary of State, nor by the India Office to give an authoritative decision as to policy in Mesopotamia, though Lord Crewe added: 'Questions involving both civil and military policy should in present circumstances be decided by the Cabinet only.' Sir John Nixon, to whom these telegrams were repeated, saw that the Home and Indian Governments were not at one on the policy involved, and asked for definite orders as to whether he was, or was not, to occupy 'Amara and Nasiriya. The Government of India replied, without further reference to the India Office, that it was not considered that the orders were conflicting, but rather that the Secretary of State wished to emphasize that no reinforcements would be sent. They added that the India Office must have received and considered the text of their instructions to him (which, in a fit of economy, had been dispatched home by post!)

When, therefore, General Nixon had secured his position on the Tigris, he naturally turned his attention to the Euphrates, and on 11th June he intimated that he proposed to occupy Nasiriya on the following grounds:

(1) it was necessary to do so in order effectively to occupy the wilayat;

(2) it was the place from which the Muntafiq could be controlled, being the head-quarters of the Turkish civil administration.

He added, incorrectly, that it was near the south end of the Shatt-al-Gharraf or Hai river, a branch of the Tigris, dry for six months of the year, which in fact is lost in marshes and irrigation canals some twenty-five miles north of Nasiriya. A further consideration, to which General Nixon had referred on 25th May, was that an advance by water to Nasiriya could only take place during the high-water period and could not be delayed until after the middle of July. In the light of subsequent events and of our present knowledge of the terrain, these arguments appear unsound, and they were in fact so regarded by the General Staff in India, though not by the Commander-in-Chief. The nightmare of ʿAjaimi and his thousands of Arabs, acting under Turkish instigation and supported by Turkish troops, operating against us on the Shatt-al-ʿArab and Lower Tigris, should have been dispelled by our knowledge of the part played by Arabs at Shuʿaiba and elsewhere. Basra was easily defensible, and once we held ʿAmara and Qurna the narrow strip of land along the Tigris was unlikely to be the scene of serious fighting.

In the end, however, the Viceroy recommended an advance on Nasiriya to the Secretary of State for India, and in the absence of any reply authorized General Nixon on 22nd June to begin operations.

With these introductory observations, I will now invite the reader to follow for a time the fortunes of General Gorringe's force, to which I was once more attached.

On 14th June a few hours after arriving at ʿAmara with Colonel Dunlop's column, I left it by river boat with my two mounts, and found my way to the Political Office in Basra early on 15th June, where I reported to Sir Percy Cox. I was at once plunged again into the routine of office work, but only for a few days. On 23rd June General Gorringe asked that I should rejoin his staff, and I went off next day by launch. My kit consisted, as before, of a haversack, with the addition, as we were moving by river, of a box or two of precious victuals, and a few cases of Chianti and beer, which might serve as passport to the honorary membership of some of the numerous temporary 'Officers' messes' set up on board various craft. I knew that if I was to be of any use I must be able to move freely, and so took no bedding or spare clothing. I joined General Gorringe at Qurna, where he had assembled his force on board such shallow draft steamers as were available, in readiness to cross the Hammar Lake.

On 27th June we started off, preceded by the Naval Flotilla, consisting of two sloops, the *Odin* and *Espiègle*,[1] two armed launches which had done service in the Persian Gulf in connexion with the repression of the arms traffic, three stern-wheelers, including the *Shushan*, and two horse-boats in each of which was mounted a 4·7 inch gun. The *Shushan* had been built with a view to the relief of Khartum in 1889, and since 1891 or so had been plying on the Upper Karun. It looked like a smallish house-boat with a boiler at one end; it was armed for this encounter with a maxim, a three-pounder, and a twelve-pound gun which threatened whenever fired to tear away the deck and plates and bend the flimsy framework of angle-iron to which they were riveted; yet it survived, and for all I know is working yet.

The sight of the *Espiègle* and *Odin* in the Hammar Lake just beyond Kubáish was awe-inspiring, nor was the view from their topmasts less impressive (this was before the days of aeroplane reconnaissance). On three sides of us was a thicket of tall reeds extending as far as the eye could reach and traversed by no visible channels; to the west the broad expanse of the Hammar Lake, dotted here and there with islands, some of which were covered with huts. Buffaloes up to their necks in mud moved slowly out of the water as we passed up the channel; here and there were fish-traps made of date stalks and reeds. Arabs in their graceful *mashhufs*, canoes made of reeds, pitched within and without, with long raking prows, scurried to and fro over the lake, obviously not wishing to join battle with us.

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[1] See *Naval Review*, iii, p. 677.

We left the *Espiègle* and *Odin* at Kubáish[1] and felt our way cautiously across the Lake. A few shots were exchanged with Turkish launches (built by Thornycrofts and delivered at Basra just before the war), but they were put to flight by the naval guns, and by the afternoon we found ourselves in possession of the 'Akaika dam, which stood at the mouth of the only navigable waterway leading from the lake to the Euphrates. It was a solid barrage, built for irrigation purposes by the local Arabs and repaired some years before, consisting of mud, date-logs, an old *mahaila* or two, some stones and a few bits of stout timber. The difference of water-level on either side of the dam was only some four feet, and it looked as if a few charges of gun-cotton would demolish it completely. Events proved otherwise; the sappers worked all night at it and it was not till next morning that a channel was cleared, through which there came a great rush of water, too strong for the stern-wheelers to stem unaided. 'Tears and prayers was had recourse to, but proved no manner of use', as said the boatswain of the s.s. *Assyria*, the first British ship to navigate the Upper Euphrates; so the troops landed and commenced to haul the ships by main force. It was typical of General Gorringe, himself a Sapper, that he personally took charge and stood on a small island in the centre of the dam, megaphone in hand, directing the tug-of-war teams on either bank: it was also typical of him that the operation was successfully and rapidly performed: it was not, however, till the 30th that the whole force was concentrated above the dam, thus making a forward move possible. The extreme deliberation that necessarily accompanied all our military movements had obvious disadvantages, but it had its compensations. We were very much in the dark as to the nature of the country: we had no maps of any possible use for tactical purposes. Preliminary ground reconnaissance on foot was a vital necessity, and the time taken in getting ships across the 'Akaika was used to good purpose by the Intelligence Branch. A series of naval reconnaissances was made, and presently these were pushed ahead on land also. I was sent forward with such parties on several occasions, as being at the moment, I believe, the only Arabic-speaking officer with the Division. All reports indicated that we were being opposed by Arabs, rather than by Turks, whose positions were on the Euphrates, commanding the line of our advance up the 'Akaika: I was anxious to get in touch with these Arabs and to get them to vacate the date-groves and leave us to fight the Turks. It was not an easy task. I pushed forward on the left bank to within a few hundred yards of the confluence of the Euphrates and the 'Akaika channel, accompanied part of the way by some men of the 24th whom I left behind, after a time, to cover my retreat; I saw an Arab, called to him, but, though armed, he ran like a hare. I was returning, keeping off the river bank and moving behind mud walls, when I saw two Turks, a sergeant and a private, emerge from the date-groves on to the tow-path opposite me and move slowly up stream. Like me, they had obviously been on reconnaissance duty. They had their backs to me: I fired at them and shot one through the back, the other in the shoulder, and then, fearing that I had roused a hornets' nest, hastened back to my patrol, who had meanwhile been reinforced by another patrol towing a bellam-load of ammunition. A brisk little action ensued and it seemed likely that we should be forced back. Crouching behind a date tree, we pushed the bellam into mid-stream, and it drifted back to our lines, according to plan, riddled with shot. Presently we advanced and I saw, to my horror, that the Arabs had been busy. The two Turks I had shot lay on the opposite side, stripped naked and their throats cut. Incidents such as these afterwards came within the experience of practically all members of the civil administration employed in Mesopotamia outside the large towns: that they should have been able, nevertheless, to put some trust in the Arab tribes, and to gain their confidence in large measure, is an indication of the spirit that animated them. All alike were convinced that if conditions could be moulded aright men would grow good to fit them. Yet the Army, staff and regimental officers alike, could scarcely be blamed for regarding Arabs, collectively, as incorrigible thieves and murderers, faithless and mercenary. Again and again they found the wounded slaughtered, the dead dug up for the sake of their clothes and left to the jackals; the word treachery was ever on their lips, and not without reason, but the political officers, assisted and encouraged by some, but by no means all, local commanders, persevered in their allotted task 'of doing the best of things in the worst of times'. Making the most of the material at hand, they eventually succeeded, even in the most backward districts, in laying fresh foundations, portions of which still endure, on which to build a new nation.

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[1] Properly Kubá'ish—plural of Kubásha, a pile of mats on which a reed-house is built.

This, however, is a digression. My next day's duty took me to the right bank of the ʿAkaika with orders to accompany the 2/7th Gurkhas and to assist in a reconnaissance. They got well ahead, and on to the bank of the Shatra canal, which was held by Turks; the country was all rice-fields and date-groves, the only cover being occasional mud walls which the Turks had loopholed. Captain Harcourt was shot in the ankle just as he came up to have a word with me; he fell in the open, and in the process of getting him under cover we nearly drowned him in a creek. Two or three of his men were killed; lateral communication was impossible, and communications difficult. I went back to report and was told to act as guide to the 1/4th Hampshires, who reinforced them during the night. I did so and returned, to be sent out later with a party of the 48th Pioneers who had instructions to secure a crossing over the Shatra canal above the enemy's right flank.

As soon as we reached the bank of the canal it became clear to me that there was a change in the temper of the Arabs: they had reached the conclusion that we should probably win the day but were reluctant to accept its implications. Groups of armed Arabs were standing behind the low walls of a hamlet on the far bank of the Shatra canal; a few unarmed men, mostly old, were moving about in the open, not knowing whether to collect their goods and fly or to stay and protect the place from pillage. It seemed the right moment to make an attempt to save bloodshed and to secure an unopposed crossing; so, covered by the rifles of a party of the 48th, I swam the creek and accosted a grey-beard. '*Salam ʿalaikum*'—'*Allah yasellimak*.' 'Are there any Turks near here?' 'I am not a Turk, I am an Arab.' 'Have you a bellam in which we can cross?' 'I am an old man, I am poor, I have no bellam.' 'I see bellam poles and paddles against the wall—I am sure you have a bellam.' 'The Turks have taken all the bellams, I am an old man . . .'&c., &c. Something had to be done: I seized a stick and beat him. '*Quwa, Quwa*,' he groaned, '*ana ʿabdak*.' 'Force, Force, I am your slave, there is a *mashhuf* close by, I will get it.' I feared a ruse and continued to beat him, simulating wrath, but in fear lest the bluff should be called. Out ran two sturdy men: 'He is our father—he is old—he is mad—leave him and we will bring a canoe.' I held my hand, and a few minutes later one was provided. 'Ferry me across in it', I said, 'and ferry the troops too, lest by leaving it to them they claim it as spoil.' The argument appealed to them, and in half-a-dozen trips we had the ammunition across, and the men; presently yet another *mashhuf* appeared, and some Hampshire men crossed behind us. The Pioneers hastened forward; the Turks retiring before them found their main position in British hands, thanks to the combined naval and military movements on either bank. I found my way to the ʿAkaika and helped some Hampshire men to bury two of their comrades who had fallen on the right bank at the foot of a palm tree: before leaving the graves I cut two crosses on the date tree, so that they might be easily identified. Two intelligent Arabs whom I had induced to come with me from the village where I had beaten the greybeard asked why I did it. I pointed to the flag flying at the mast of one of the Flotilla: 'That is the *wasm*[1] of the living,' I replied, 'this cross is the *wasm* of our dead. Respect both, or there will be blood between us.' I rejoined the *Shushan* before dark, after providing the two Arabs with a safe conduct for themselves and a written promise of immunity for their village from the wrath to come, subject to good behaviour.

Meanwhile the Navy had cleared the 'Akaika of mines and the wounded were being collected, together with about 100 prisoners and two guns and a quantity of ammunition and stores: our losses had been about 25 killed and 75 wounded from a force of less than 2,000. Sir Percy Cox, who had arrived from Basra the day before, went off with the Senior Naval Officer, Captain Nunn, to Suq-ash-Shuyukh on 6th July and took charge of the town, hoisting the Union Jack and putting a Shaikh in charge. He was received without enthusiasm, but with courtesy: his reputation had preceded him; his excellent knowledge of Arabic, his commanding presence, and his supreme gift of judgement enabled him to build a bridge over which waverers could cross to our side without loss of what they valued most, their dignity. This done, he gave me his general instructions as to how to carry on, and returned to Basra.

That afternoon found me in the bows of the *Shushan* with a captured Turkish officer, whose duty it was to point out the position of enemy mines in the main channel; time had not, however, permitted the Turks to lay any, but they had sunk two steamers (the *Frat* and *Risafa*) a mile or so below the Majinina canal in an unsuccessful attempt to block the fairway. Each side of the river was held in force, and the enemy could be seen hard at work digging trenches, whilst the Thornycroft launch bombarded us with its little pom-pom and an ancient field gun lobbed great cast-iron shells at us, which seldom burst in the soft mud of which the countryside mainly consisted. The Turkish position was obviously very strong: in fact, it bore a striking resemblance to the ideal position of the old Musketry Drill Book, at once caricatured and immortalized by Mark Sykes in *D'Ordel's Tactics*. On the flanks was an impassable marsh; on the right front was a flat open plain broken only by a canal of unknown depth; their left front was among date-groves intersected by walls, which gave them every advantage of concealment; and to reach their trenches a deep canal had to be crossed. Reinforcements and supplies were necessary: to bring them up we had to send back our river steamers, and nearly all the naval flotilla with us, some of which had to be withdrawn in any case because the water in the Hammar Lake was falling: unless we could get fresh troops and supplies at once it might be impossible to get them at all. If, in the meanwhile, the Arabs behind us were to take the offensive, we might well find ourselves surrounded and our communications cut by the falling river. Be it remembered, too, that though we had driven back the Turks, we had not defeated the Arabs. They had opposed us, but had got away with negligible losses and probably with more Turkish arms and ammunition than we ourselves had secured. We could only muster 1,900 rifles while the Turks had 2,000, apart from Arabs, and were in a strong defensive position. It was an unpleasant position involving risks as great as any taken in the whole course of the campaign. Had the Turks, who were being steadily reinforced, been in a position to obtain the active help of the Arabs, Nasiriya might have taken the place of Kut in history, with incalculable results.

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[1] = the brand.

The weather tested to the utmost the endurance of all ranks, whether on land or on the river: the troops had been engaged in more or less active operations for twenty days in a shade temperature of over 110° from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with exceptionally humid air. Mosquitos were ubiquitous and virulent. Every box of ammunition, every package of food, had to be man-handled, as we had not a single pack animal with us and in any case conditions would have prevented their employment. We had no Arab labour to help unload barges. Officers and men alike took their share in carrying rations and ammunition: it was cruel work, the effects of which were aggravated by the almost complete absence of any fresh meat or vegetables. We were not always even able to get our full rations, and when they came the bully beef was so warm that it came out of the tin swimming in grease, the butter rancid from the same cause. It was with such conditions, as well as with the enemy positions, that we had to reckon. General Gorringe was equal to the emergency. The river steamers returned at once and were back within the week with an additional Brigade and some howitzers and supplies. He detailed me for reconnaissance work again, first on our right flank, towards the ʻAtabiya canal, where it proved that little could be done, then on the left flank. Between our trenches and those of the Turks was a stretch of flat ground, on which nothing grew but a little camel-thorn and, close to the river bank, a clump of sixteen tall palm trees. I had made a preliminary reconnaissance the day after our arrival, disguised (to a distant observer) by an Arab headdress and cloak; and had watched the Turks, only fifty yards away, sinking in the fairway *mahailas* loaded with stones, the position of which I noted. What was now required was precise information as to the depth of the Majinina canal which ran from the river to the marsh just in front of and obliquely to the Turkish trenches. The first time I tried I had little success. Clad only in a shirt to which were affixed my badges of rank, and a pair of rubber shoes, I crawled the best part of two thousand yards on my belly till it was hot with thorns: before I quite got to the canal I was spotted by a Turkish patrol, who gave chase, firing at me in the dark as I fled. I leapt into the river at the bend and floated, when I was not swimming under water, to the other side. I miscalculated my distance and reached the shore near a very wide-awake sentry. I could see him and was in terror lest he should see me and, very properly, shoot or stick me without ado; whether "Ole Bill' of happy memory had given me the idea, I know not, but I swore loudly in the English vernacular—he swore back at me parrot-like and allowed me to approach and all was well.

The second attempt was more successful. Smarting not only from thorns but from my failure of the previous night, and spurred on by General Gorringe's insistence on the importance of the information, I tried again, this time well to our left flank away from the river, and reached the end of the canal which I found to be well away from the Turks: it was shallow here, and fordable even by a Gurkha. I tried again in the middle; I crawled up and lay for what seemed an hour on the bank of the canal, watching a mound fifty or a hundred yards away. Was there a sentry there? I could hear the noise of pick and shovel in the Turkish lines, and snatches of Arab conversation. I plucked up my courage and, slipping into the canal, reached the middle; it was about 4ft. 6 in. deep. As I did so, up jumped two figures from the mound and rushed at me, firing wildly: I scrambled out and ran like a hare, fearing less the random shots of the sentries than the fusillade which might break out from our lines, or from both, but nothing happened. My flight brought me near the bank of the river, and I walked cautiously up it to near the Majinina canal, reaching it some 200 yards from its mouth. No one seemed near, so I slipped in and allowed the current to carry me down the canal, letting my feet drag on the bottom so as to get some idea of the depth. For some time I could not touch bottom, and dared not dive for fear of splashing and attracting notice: I closed my eyes, lest even they should attract notice, and covered my face and head with mud. Presently my feet began to drag on the bottom and after what seemed an age the water shallowed. I crawled out, ready to run for it again, but there was no one there: I was back at the point I had reached the previous day. But I had not reckoned with time: it was midnight before the moon went down, and by this time dawn was not far off. I had two miles to go through heavy mud, almost up to my knees, and was dead tired. At first I went 400 yards and rested, then 200, then 100; finally I stopped like an exhausted bullock: my knees had given way and I felt empty—of stomach and of head: my shoes had gone and I had only my shirt, but I felt only feeble, not cold. With the first flush of dawn I felt better and struggled on a few hundred yards; the soil became firmer; I saw our sentries, who had been warned that I was out; I washed off some of the mud in the river, wrote my report, and slept till the sun was high.

The General was pleased, but, as was his wont, he joined, like St. Paul, exhortation to commendation. He disliked the idea of a frontal attack, especially as the difficulty of observation made it doubtful if we could make the most of our artillery, and the next night I was detailed to form part of an officers' patrol, including two Eton wet-bobs from the 1/4th Hampshires, to see if we could repeat, in the marsh on the Turkish right, the amphibious tactics that had been applied with such success at Qurna. It was an eerie experience: we had nothing but the stars to guide us, and a compass which was of little use; the water was shallow, with patches of reeds here and there; in the darkness all perspective was lost and a line of low reeds looked like an embankment. Again and again we stuck, and had to take to the water and push our craft: if we were to be of any use it was essential that we should be able to see the low mounds on which the enemy's right flank appeared to rest, and from which their position could be invaded; it was equally necessary that we should return with the information. We sat and hoped for the dawn; when it began to break we could see figures moving about on the mound, some 400 to 600 yards away. That was enough for us, we hastened off lest a machine gun should find us, and reported that the mounds could be approached by bellam. This was on the night of the 12th/13th. General Gorringe received the report with satisfaction, and determined to try to occupy the low mounds by an expedition in bellams: that afternoon I found myself under orders to lead the 24th Punjabis to the spot we had reached the previous day. This led me to take a very serious decision, of which General Melliss, who commanded on this flank, was aware. I was convinced that the attack could not succeed, for reasons which I gave—for one thing the water was too shallow; for another, I did not feel sure that we had found out enough, and I wanted to make another reconnaissance. To guide a regiment in such circumstances was a responsibility which I did not care to take, and in the hope of inducing the G.O.C. to have the position further examined I told him, in writing, that I would go as a soldier attached to the 24th, or as a Political Officer, but I would not take the responsibility of acting as guide. Had he court-martialled me, I should not have blamed him, but he probably realized that my commission, which I was risking, was more to me than anything else: he said nothing and sent with the column Captain W. Dent, his G.S.O. Intelligence, who had been with us. The attack was not successful: all but two British officers were killed, and 150 men were killed and wounded out of a total of about 400. I attended the burial service next day, wondering whether I had done right; I am still not sure.

The 24th Punjabis were not, however, sacrificed wholly in vain, for the Turks strengthened their left flank at the expense of their right, which assisted us later on. Operations dragged on slowly for a week or ten days. A great event was the arrival of two Caudron aeroplanes, out of the four in the country: these enabled the G.O.C. for the first time to visualize the topography of the country. A further Brigade and an extra battery also arrived.

On the 22nd the stage was set for the battle of Nasiriya. On the Turkish side were 4,200 Turks, 6 guns, and a large number of Arabs: the British force included 4,600 rifles and 26 naval and military guns. The story of the battle is well told in the *Official History*: it was, like its predecessors, a joint effort by Navy and Army combined: it was, like Shuʿaiba, largely a soldiers' battle; it was fought under conditions reminiscent of the Indian Mutiny and earlier campaigns in the East, with this difference, that a majority of the troops were not seasoned men but raw troops, whose numbers had been reduced by at least 25 per cent. by sickness. The Turkish casualties were 1,000 captured and 2,000 killed and wounded, ours being 104 killed and 429 wounded, of whom 44 killed and 110 wounded were in the West Kents, whose strength was less than 500. The 1/4th Hampshires had 45 casualties out of 140 and the 17th Sapper Company lost 20 out of 55 men. These figures give some idea of the severity of the fighting and the tenacity of the Turks. The part played by the Royal Navy in the engagement was not less notable than in previous amphibious engagements. At a critical moment in the battle Captain Nunn laid the aged *Shushan* close alongside the Turkish trenches, blazed into them at point-blank range, and pushing on with the *Medjidieh* pursued the flying Turks right into Nasiriya, where white flags were flying as profusely as the bullets which poured on him from the Turkish barracks.

After the battle, as after the preceding engagement, I spent some hours assisting in the evacuation of the wounded. I was horrified at what I saw, for at every point it was clear that the shamefully bad arrangements arose from bad staff work on the part of the medical authorities, rather than from inherent difficulties. The wounded were crowded on board to lie on iron decks that had not been cleaned since horses and mules had stood on them for a week. There were few mattresses. The *Official Medical History* fully bears out these impressions.

One point is worthy of mention: it was intended to ensure the crossing of the Majinina canal by a bridge, material for which was in a barge which the *Sumana* very skilfully grounded at the mouth of the canal. The bridge, built with great gallantry and with heavy losses by the Sappers, proved too difficult to use, but, according to the *Official History* the barge prevented water from flowing down the canal and thus lowered the level. I do not think that this was so. I went over the ground the same day, being personally interested to see by daylight what I had sought by night. The barge was in place, but I could see no change in water-level: a reduction of about six inches had taken place since I had reconnoitred it, but this was due to the steadily falling river.

We occupied Nasiriya next morning, i.e. on 25th July: an Arab deputation came to tell us that it had been evacuated the previous night by the Turks, who had withdrawn to Shatra on their way to Kut. A hospital full of wounded men was left in an indescribable state of filth. The inhabitants, no longer in suspense as to their fate, received us with the same philosophic courtesy that had marked our reception at ʿAmara. I was appointed Assistant to the Military Governor, Lt.-Col. T. St. A. Nevinson of the 76th Batt. R.F.A., in addition to my duties as Political Officer with the 12th Division, and in this dual capacity spent perhaps the most strenuous month of my life. I was under Military Law responsible for finding billets for the troops, for ensuring that disciplinary and sanitary orders were understood and obeyed, and for the administration of, at all events, a modicum of justice as between individuals. As Political Officer my sphere was conterminous with that of the Division and its lines of communication from Kubáish westwards; I had to assist in obtaining supplies, of which we were in urgent need, and on occasions to co-operate with the Intelligence Service, whose very efficient organization occasionally overlapped my own. I had a free hand, but little or no assistance beyond that of a soldier clerk who was, of course, unable to speak Arabic. One of the first matters that fell to me for investigation was the appearance in the mainstream of the Euphrates of vast quantities of dead fish, which obstructed every backwater and polluted the atmosphere, making the water almost undrinkable. It was at first thought that our enemies had poisoned the river, but it turned out that the fish had died from natural causes. As the water in the marshes grew shallower the temperature gradually rose to a point fatal to the fish, which crowded in shoals into the cooler water of the canals. Finally the temperature even here became too great and they died. The local Arabs thereupon breached the dam leading to the river, and allowed the putrid bodies to float down stream.

The demands of Departments were endless: the hospitals required milk, eggs, and chickens; the Supply Branch required beef, mutton, and vegetables in far greater quantities than were forthcoming, and owing to shortage of transport were dependent for some months on local supplies of flour, ground on the spot in a mill which the Turks had not destroyed. Freedom of movement up and down stream was essential if supplies were to be forthcoming, and it was not easy, at first, to devise a system which ensured this whilst preventing the more obvious forms of espionage. According to the Intelligence Reports of the period (Moberly, iii. 60 n.), Turkish officers openly stated that several of them were able in Arab clothes to visit the bazaars in the area we occupied, and that they possessed detailed knowledge of the movements of our troops. I do not believe either statement to be true: apart from the fact that boastful claims of this sort were the stock-in-trade of captured officers, I never heard of an authenticated case of a Turkish officer entering towns in our occupation. As for a detailed knowledge of our troop movements, this was denied to all but the highest authorities on our own side, and the complexity of our transport system offered insuperable difficulties to the collection of accurate data.

It was my business to work hand in hand with the Provost-Marshal and the Military Police, who were responsible for the prevention of petty thefts and trespass within the narrow limits of the camp, and for the observance of reasonable sanitary regulations by Arabs on the river bank and in the vicinity of the camp. We had a hard task, for any undue severity or insistence on our part frightened away the villagers who had goods to sell. A *modus vivendi* was, however, quickly found; the Arabs sent their women to Nasiriya with village produce, confident that they would get a fair price and would be unharmed; for the purchase of food-stuffs in bulk Arab contractors were employed, an unofficial issue of passes solved many difficulties, and within a fortnight something approaching a system had been organized. Payments were made in rupees, partly in silver but mainly in notes, for contractors soon realized that a journey to Basra with a cash-bag was a perilous undertaking, whereas the halves of rupee notes could be sent with safety by successive couriers. Later on, the Field Treasure Chest Officer was authorized to issue orders on the Treasury at Basra, thus saving needless transfers of money.

Arabs have, from time immemorial, been well aware that biting flies are responsible for the transmission of the disease known as *surra*, and they avoided sending their animals into the fly-infested areas along the Tigris and the Euphrates, especially from Nasiriya to Fao. We managed to hire camels for work within the limits of the owner's district, but no owner would allow his camels to work for any length of time elsewhere. He would only sell, and that unwillingly. Thus it was that the efforts made at this time to organize Arab Camel Transport Corps were not rewarded with success. Imported camel transport, too, was on the whole a failure: even with extra food and supervision the condition of the imported camels, or of local camels under military supervision, did not compare favourably with that of the local Arab-owned beasts. This is not surprising, for the Arab has no equal in the lore of camels, on which always the race has depended far more than on horses.[1]

It would serve no useful purpose to recount in detail the innumerable problems with which every Military Governor and Political Officer was confronted on first taking over a district or town. It was my first and only experience of actual work in a district, and it was not lost on me. It enabled me on the one hand to realize the immense strain on the temper and physical energy of work of this sort, especially in the height of the hot weather, with the barest minimum of creature comforts. On the other hand, I was able to sympathize with the point of view both of the troops and of the staff: they had fought and beaten the enemy with immense labour; sickness and death had reduced the ranks of every unit by half or more. So far from being benevolently neutral the Arabs had been hostile; viewed as combatants 'manners they had none, and their customs were very beastly', as the boatswain said of the people of Muscat.[2] Had we been defeated, they would have fallen on us without mercy; it irked many to see them treated, none the less, as friends, and paid liberally for such supplies and services as they deigned to offer. That this was politic, however, there could be no doubt: any attempt to requisition supplies would have failed at the outset and jeopardized future success; forced labour was out of the question except, in conformity with immemorial custom, for the protection of the land against floods.

Towards the end of August, on recall by Sir Percy Cox to Basra, to take charge of his office whilst he accompanied Sir John Nixon up the Tigris, I handed over to my successor, Captain Pulford,[3] and departed by bellam early one morning for Qurna, where I hoped to board a river steamer. A few Shaikhs and headmen saw me off, with the invariable courtesy which in Mesopotamia, as elsewhere in the East, does so much to oil the wheels of life; but I was more gratified when a group of women, recognizing me as I slipped down stream, raised a wail of sorrow; I valued their opinion.

[1] See Blenkinsop, p. 338.

[2] Malcolm, *Sketches of Persia*, i. 9.

[3] He died of cholera on 28th June 1916.

CHAPTER V[1]

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE BASRA WILAYAT

> 'The enthusiasm of the people is very fine and looks well in print; but I have never known it produce anything but confusion. . . . I therefore earnestly recommend you, wherever you go, to trust nothing to the enthusiasm of the people. Give them a strong and just, and if possible a good government; but above all a strong one, which shall enforce upon them to do their duty by themselves and their country.'
>
> (DUKE OF WELLINGTON, *on the military administration of Occupied Territories.* 10*th December* 1811.)

Sir Percy Cox. Police Force organized. Civil Courts and Revenue Department started. Lt.-Col. Knox. Mr. H. R. C. Dobbs. Rebellion at Najaf and Karbala. The Basra Times. *Hostile Trading Concerns. Foreign Commercial Firms. Disturbances in Persia. Education. Posts. Telegraphs. American Mission.*

WITH the occupation of Nasiriya all the principal towns in the Basra wilayat were in our hands, for ʿAli Gharbi on the Tigris had been occupied some time previously (see p. 81), thus bringing us in closer touch, on the Persian side of the frontier, with the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, at that time the virtually independent hereditary ruler of Western Luristan. We were thus responsible for the administration of an area of some 20,000 square miles and a population of 785,600, made up, according to a rough census made in 1919, as follows:

Administrative Sanjaq (Division).	*Sunni*	*Shiʿah.*	*Jewish.*	*Christian.*	*Sabaeans and others.*	*Total.*
Basra (incl. Qurna) .	24,408	130,494	6,928	2,221	1,549	165,600
ʿAmara . . .	7,000	284,700	3,000	300	5,000	300,000
Muntafiq (Nasiriya) .	11,150	306,220	160	30	2,440	320,000
TOTALS	42,558	721,414	10,088	2,551	8,989	785,600

As explained in Chapter I, we had to replace, over the whole of this area, every working part of the former civil administration, which had disappeared, with almost all its records, leaving practically no officials even of the humblest rank behind. We had, at the same time, so to administer this area as to ensure that the needs of the Expeditionary Force were met to the fullest possible extent, and the safety of the long lines of communication ensured with a minimum dispersal of force: conversely it was necessary to take steps to prevent the civil population from 'comforting the King's enemies' by supplying them with foodstuffs and information. To this end Sir Percy Cox devoted himself almost single-handed during 1915. He brought to his task a wealth of experience and qualities of mind altogether exceptional, and a constitution which twenty years of almost continuous service on the Somaliland coast, in Muscat, and in Bushire had only served to toughen. Of administrative experience in the ordinary sense of the term he had but little, but he possessed the confidence of the India Office and of the Viceroy, whose Foreign Secretary he had been till the outbreak of war. During his twelve years in the Persian Gulf he had gained the respect, and in some cases the affection of the Chiefs of the Arab principalities, including the redoubtable Ibn Saʿud, and he had acquired, as Consul-General, a thorough knowledge of every personality of importance in South Persia. With the Shaikh of Mohammerah he was on terms of real friendship, and he knew not a little of the workings of the Persian Government in Tehran, of its weaknesses and its trials. Long years of co-operation with the Royal Navy in the suppression of the traffic in arms in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of ʿOman had brought him into close touch with nearly every naval officer on the East Indies Station, and as Foreign Secretary he had been brought into touch with the principal personalities in the Government of India. He knew, indeed, little or nothing at first hand of Turkish Arabia, but he could speak Arabic fluently, and read and if need be write it with sufficient ease. This extraordinary man, already in his fiftieth year when war broke out, retired from Government service ten years later, with undiminished vigour and health and with a reputation, alike in Arabic-speaking countries and in South Persia, which no less than the prowess of British arms enhanced the prestige of the Government he represented. By temperament he was ideally suited to face the problems that presented themselves daily: if he did not suffer fools gladly, they were seldom aware of the fact; he was a man of few words, but a good listener; he gave himself freely to all, but he never gave himself away. Patient to a fault, he could and did command loyalty, as well as exact obedience; he could work for months on end for twelve hours a day, in the gloomy squalor of a cellar in an Arab house, with unimpaired temper, though, as he once remarked to an inquiring lady, 'he sometimes burned inwardly'. He was methodical, and his memory was good; slow to reach a decision, but quick to give effect to it; very tenacious in pursuit of the aims to which he directed his efforts. To his influence more than to that of any other man must be ascribed the successive decisions which culminated in the occupation of Baghdad. On 23rd November, on which day we occupied Basra, he had telegraphed 'privately' to the Viceroy (see p. 21) that the G.O.C. had been studying the question of the advance to Baghdad in case that course should be decided on: and, he added 'I find it difficult to see how we can well avoid taking over Baghdad.

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[1] Hansard, *Official History*, Candler, *Review of the Civil Administration.*

We can hardly allow Turkey to retain possession and make difficulties for us at Basra; nor can we allow any other Power to take it, but once in occupation we must remain, for we could not possibly allow the Turks to return after accepting from Arabs co-operation afforded on the understanding that the Turkish régime had disappeared for good.' The logical and inescapable sequence of events was thus clear to him from the first, but it was long before he was able to induce successive Commanders-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, or the authorities in Simla and Whitehall, to face the inevitable implications of a forward policy in terms of men and material.

It was left to Sir Percy Cox to provide an effective administrative machine in the Basra wilayat.

The first departments to receive attention were those concerned with law and order, namely the police and the Military Governorates. Reference has already been made to the appointment as Commissioner of Police of Mr. (hereafter Major or Lt.-Col.) Gregson, and to the results, gratifying alike to the Force and to the Arab public, of his restoration of public security on a basis sounder than any that had existed in the *sanjaq* of Basra for many years. A similar organization was provided in ʿAmara within a few weeks of its organization, and a little later at Nasiriya: Qurna and Qalʿat Salih, which were little more than villages, were not provided with regular police, but were patrolled by a small body of men obtained from the local headmen. Outside the walls of these places, however, these local bodies had, as yet, no authority; robberies were frequent, and no individual Shaikh could accept responsibility for more than a few miles. It was therefore decided to organize an irregular force of district police under the name *shabana* (a local word of Persian origin meaning 'night watchmen'), to take the place of the old Turkish gendarmerie in the districts. They were to be liable for service only within their own districts, recruited as far as possible through the good offices of the Shaikhs of their respective tribes, and controlled by the Political Officers in charge of the district. They were first organized on the Tigris between Qurna and ʿAmara by Captain Macpherson, who had spent some ten years in the country in the service of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie & Co., and was for some weeks attached to the force at Ahwaz. He knew Arabic well, and no better man could have been chosen for this purpose and for the numerous posts of responsibility which he occupied in later years. As time went on *shabana* were raised in every district, and they ultimately reached a total of several thousand, most of whom were incorporated, in the years following the establishment of a constitutional government, in the Civil Police or the Arab army. In the period dealt with in this chapter their

Maj.-Gen. Sir PERCY Z. COX
G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., D.C.L.
Indian Political Dept.

numbers totalled about 500: they relieved the military forces of patrol and guard duties on roads and rivers, and in some places of guard duties on store-dumps. They were later used for the arrest of evil-doers and the prevention of tribal disturbances, and on occasion for the collection of revenue. They exercised, even in 1915, an influence far beyond the direct authority of the Expeditionary Force, and beyond that ever exercised by the Turkish gendarmerie whom they replaced. By saving travellers in tribal territory from the necessity, universal in Turkish days, of submitting to the exactions of Shaikhs who were accustomed to demand passage fees from them—payments which could not always ensure immunity from pillage—they were a first step towards the creation of a police force covering the whole of ʿIraq, a consummation only achieved some ten years later.

Justice next occupied attention. The Turkish Courts had disappeared, and it was necessary to replace them. Whether or not Turkish law should be administered was from the beginning an open question. Turkey was not a signatory to the Hague Convention of 1907 to which were annexed Regulations[1] relative to the administration of Occupied Territory, but international custom requires that in Occupied Territories the existing laws should be administered as far as possible, unless and until the G.O.C. in Chief expressly orders otherwise. For a variety of reasons it was considered inexpedient at this stage to adopt the Turkish Codes. In the first place they were based on the existence of a series of Courts of Justice, culminating in a Court of Cassation at Constantinople: to amend the various laws in such a way as to make them workable within the narrow limits of Occupied Territory would have involved months of work. In the second place the Turkish law assumed the existence of an official hierarchy which did not in fact exist. Thirdly, while Turkish law was a complete, logical, and most elaborate structure, it had never functioned properly in Mesopotamia; for many of its principal provisions there had come to be substituted local and unofficial evasions which were lucrative to the ill-paid minions of the law and not unacceptable to the public.

In these circumstances it was decided to appoint a Senior Judicial Officer, and to entrust to him the preparation of a provisional and temporary Code of Law suited to our immediate needs and based partly on Indian and partly on Turkish law. Lt.-Col. S. G. Knox,[2] of the Indian Political Department, a barrister-at-law and a good Arabic scholar, with long experience in the Persian Gulf, was selected for this task. He was assisted by Captain C. F. Mackenzie, of the same service, who had judicial experience both in India and in Bahrain, and was exceptionally proficient in Arabic.

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[1] For text see Appendix.

[2] He had been Acting Consul-General at Bushire during the whole of 1914 and the first months of 1915.

The Courts started to function in April, and proved very popular. Colonel Knox and his associates invested the Courts with dignity from the outset, and the fact that all proceedings and pleadings were in Arabic, instead of Turkish, was very gratifying to all classes. It is an extraordinary fact, often overlooked by writers on Mesopotamia, that the Turkish administrative machine which we inherited was, even at the outset, in many respects more foreign to the people at large than our own. The laws were unfamiliar and largely unapplied, because inapplicable, and all official business, whether in the Courts or elsewhere, was conducted in a foreign tongue. The experience acquired by Colonel Knox in the administration of this tentative body of law, known as the 'Iraq Occupied Territories Code, enabled us, in the months following the occupation of Baghdad, to systematize and unify the whole system of justice, slowly substituting permanent enactments for the temporary code which had served us in such good stead in earlier years. Further references to this subject will be found in a subsequent chapter; meanwhile it is sufficient to say that the system worked well.

Before turning to other branches of administration, it is necessary to mention another consequence of the adoption of this Code; namely the substitution of civil for military Courts in the trial of all causes which did not directly affect the safety of the Armed Forces of His Britannic Majesty. Courts-martial are, at the best, unsatisfactory tribunals for the trial of civilians. Cases of murder, highway robbery, and the like could only be brought before them, where members of the force were not directly concerned, by stretching the true intention of military law; nor were verdicts hastily reached by men unskilled in the sifting of evidence wholly satisfactory.[1] Confirmation of sentences of death pronounced by the Civil Courts was reserved to the Commander-in-Chief, acting on the advice of the Chief Political Officer, but for practical purposes the Courts were independent, and the fact was widely understood and appreciated.

The jurisdiction of the Civil Courts was at first limited to the *sanjaq* of Basra and was only by slow degrees extended to the *sanjaqs* of 'Amara and Nasiriya, and then only for certain types of cause. The tribal areas could not wisely be brought so soon within the scope of laws devised for townspeople. A regulation was therefore drawn up by Mr. Dobbs, on the lines of the Indian Frontier Crimes Regulation, giving political officers authority to deal on tribal lines with the questions arising in their jurisdiction, and investing them with full powers to try cases which it was thought inexpedient to refer to arbitration. This regulation, which is still in force in Mesopotamia,[1] proved of great service to political officers; it was also congenial to the tribes, as it enabled them to settle their disputes on time-honoured lines under impartial supervision. It played an important part in the pacification of the country, and encouraged the will to arbitrate by giving the political officer tribal power to enforce decisions with the assistance of the *shabana* or the local town police.

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[1] See Marshall, p. 277.

The system gratified the Shaikhs; and even the priesthood, whose services could be utilized at will under the Regulation, were pleased. It helped us all to a better understanding of the principles underlying tribal custom: these principles varied little from district to district, though in detail there were many differences; they were based not on Islamic law, but on something much older, human nature, and on local conventions, some of which, it would not be difficult to show, were probably codified by Khammurabi in 2000 B.C. or earlier. Only in the matter of murder did we find it at all difficult to adopt the tribal outlook: tribesmen normally regard the payment of blood-money as a substitute for the punishment of the murderer. Their point of view was simple: the acceptance and payment of blood-money automatically extinguished a feud which might otherwise endanger the peace of a whole district and involve many innocent people. For the maintenance of order the payment of blood-money on an adequate scale was sufficient; they had little belief in the deterrent effect of imprisonment and regarded the execution of a murderer in ordinary circumstances as the waste of a good life. 'Vengeance', they would say, 'is in God's hands; public order is in ours: we have done our share.' Extremes are apt to meet, and the opponents of capital punishment in England would find much sympathy and some understanding of their ideas amongst simple tribesmen, who hold many things sacred, but not life, and regard the successful marauder, whether or not his activities involve bloodshed, with the respect which, in many European circles, is accorded to the rapid acquisition of financial power.

Concurrently with the organization of the Police and of a judicial system, steps were taken to reconstitute the Revenue Department. For this purpose Sir Percy Cox was so fortunate as to secure the services of Mr. H. R. C. (later Sir Henry) Dobbs, I.C.S., also of the Indian Political Department. He had travelled extensively in Mesopotamia and Persia in pre-war days, had been both Judicial and Revenue Commissioner in India and Boundary Commissioner on the Russo-Afghan frontier, and was actually under orders to take up the post of Political Resident in Turkish Arabia and Consul-General at Baghdad when war broke out. He had personal knowledge of the Middle East from Aleppo to Tehran, of Afghanistan of the N.W. Frontier of India, and of Baluchistan. He and Sir Percy Cox between them could speak at first hand of almost all the territories with which we were likely to be concerned until after the Armistice: any gaps in their knowledge could generally be made good by junior officers whose services were reluctantly lent, as the months passed, for duty in Mesopotamia.

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[1] A somewhat similar system is in force in the Sudan. Parly. Report, Cmd. 3403, 1929.

Captain Noel, aided by the sage counsel of Dr. M. Y. Young of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, was our expert on the Bakhtiari, and later on Kurdistan; R. W. Bullard on Constantinople and the Turks at large; Soane on Kurdistan and at a later date on Dizful and Shushtar. We had men who knew Baghdad well; D. L. R. Lorimer had explored Pusht-i-Kuh thoroughly; Leachman had made long journeys in Central Arabia, and the representatives of local commercial firms and the captains of river steamers could be relied on for much valuable information as to conditions in Mesopotamia itself. These men, with many others, made a group whose collective knowledge was unrivalled, and under the guidance of Sir Percy Cox it was possible to make their knowledge subserve our military purposes.

Mr. Dobbs, who arrived in January 1915, had perhaps a harder task than either the Senior Judicial Officer or the Commissioner of Police. The task of organizing the collection of revenue, an essential attribute of Government, quite apart from its financial aspect, first engaged his attention: he was fortunate in obtaining a certain amount of expert assistance from natives of the country, but was grievously hampered, in circumstances already explained, by the lack of revenue records. To the collection and administration of the revenue were added, in rapid succession, responsibility for the Department of Pious Foundations (*Waqf*), Land Records (*Tapu*), Crown Lands, Customs, Ottoman Public Debt, Excise, and the Tobacco Régie, which last had to be wound up in a legal manner by the collection of outstanding debts. To these responsibilities were added the supervision of Educational institutions and the organization and finances of Municipalities. For all these departments, except Customs, and also until the arrival of Lt.-Col. Knox for that of Justice, he retained personal responsibility till he was invalided to India in October 1916, when his place was taken by Mr. Philby. The Customs Department was organized as an independent unit by Mr. C. R. Watkins, of the Imperial Indian Customs Service, who arrived from India in August 1915. Of his services and those of his Department I shall have occasion to refer elsewhere.

Mr. Dobbs left Mesopotamia before the era of printed administration reports began, and much of his work is buried in the official files;

to him, however, is due the credit for laying the sound foundations in all these departments, on which all subsequent developments were based, and it was with peculiar satisfaction that those officers who had worked with and under him in earlier days welcomed his appointment, in 1923, as High Commissioner in ʿIraq and British Consul-General, in succession to Sir Percy Cox. He toured extensively in hot and cold weather alike, inspiring political officers with his own zeal, and tirelessly collecting essential data. Before he left the machine was in working order, and he had collected round him a staff of assistants who could be relied on to continue the work on sound lines; what is perhaps more important, he had gained for the multifarious departments which he controlled a degree of public confidence to which the Turks had neither aspired nor attained. Their system, indeed, was for the most part one of calculated and deliberate injustice towards the Shiʿah majority, and of contempt for the Christian and Jewish minorities. To the early appreciation of this fact, and to the steps taken by the Revenue Department to do justice to the Shiʿah community, may be ascribed in large measure the fact that at no time after the battle of Shuʿaiba were there any serious internal troubles in the *sanjaqs* of ʿAmara and Basra.

Sanitation was an exceedingly difficult problem. There was no sort of water-supply system, and the whole population until 1917 drank water from the canals, filtered through conical earthen jars. The troops drew water in kerosene-oil tins from the centre of the river until the summer of 1916. In the centre of the stream were anchored dozens of steamships, discharging refuse, sewage, and ashes: in the centre of the stream, too, were dumped for some months the carcases of animals that had died of disease. To burn them was not practicable, for all firewood came from India; to bury was not always possible, for every square yard of ground not liable to flooding was needed for camps. It was some time before a solution was reached by the erection of incinerators. The restriction of space due to the encroachment of water had another effect. Local resources were drawn on to supplement meat supplies, and cattle and sheep were bought in excessive numbers. These animals mostly came from the Euphrates and had never been grain-fed. They pined away in their pens, and enteritis made those that survived worthless for meat.[1]

Every effort was made with improvised water-carts and water-barges to give the civil population a better water-supply. It was a boon that did much to commend the Army of Occupation to the mass of the people.

The Turks did nothing whatever after the outbreak of war to secure the faltering allegiance of the Shiʿah population. As soon as it became clear to them that the *jihad* was a failure, they deliberately commenced to oppress the Arabs, confiscating money, valuables, and foodstuffs, and mulcting even the priesthood of Najaf and Karbala. They endeavoured to impress all males from the ages of 26 to 60 for military service, including even the Jewish and Baghdad Christians who had hitherto been able to purchase immunity. When the inevitable riots broke out not long after the battle of Shuʿaiba troops were sent to restore order: guns were turned on the crowd, and whether by accident or design the sacred buildings at Najaf were damaged. The enraged populace, after three days' fighting, got the upper hand, burnt the principal government buildings, disarmed without serious bloodshed the Turkish garrison, and pillaged the town. The outbreak at Najaf was followed by outbreaks of lesser magnitude at Karbala, Kufa, Hilla, and Tawairij, from which towns the Turkish garrisons and all Turkish officials were evicted.[1] The outbreak at Karbala in June started with an attack on the town by the Bani Hasan, who burnt and pillaged the *sarai*, whereupon the mob, led by the Kammuna family, which assumed control of the town, turned out the Government.

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[1] See Blenkinsop, p. 297.

This rebellion was not suppressed by the Turks, but nothing came of it: the Arabs were without leaders and without organization. Between them and our forces in the Basra wilayat lay a solid block of tribesmen still under Turkish influence. From first to last the Turks despised the Arabs, collectively and individually: *oderint dum metuant* was their guiding principle in dealing with all non-Turkish races. The Arabs resented the crimes and follies of their rulers less than we had reason to expect. A circular letter was addressed to the Muslim world, signed by two hundred of the principal men of Karbala and endorsed by the *ʿUlama*, protesting against the bombardment and massacre,[2] but though the facts were not in doubt, they aroused little interest in Islamic countries. A few months later the Turks were back in office, though not in power.

A daily newspaper in English, *The Basra Times*, was started on 29th November 1914 under military auspices, the first editor being Captain Branson. It was taken over some eighteen months later by the civil administration, and was technically a Government publication till in 1921 it passed, none too soon, under commercial management. An Arabic edition was started early in 1915 and a Persian edition in 1916. Soon after the capture of Baghdad, *The Baghdad Times* appeared, likewise under the responsibility of the civil administration, in English and Arabic. In both these ventures I took great personal interest and

[1] Debates, H.C. 21.9.15.

[2] Debates, H.C. 12.10.16.

encouraged the editors to use their own initiative without too frequent references to superior authority or to the Censor. My confidence in their prudence was not invariably justified, but I felt that a few indiscretions were a small price to pay for the maintenance, as far as in us lay, of the principle of a free press. Despite the Censor, *The Basra Times* and *The Baghdad Times* were links with home. They recorded with a reliability at least as great as that of the London Dailies the triumphs and reverses of British arms in every theatre of war. It was often difficult to cater for the enormous demand: every sheet was eagerly read by scores, and treasured even when in tatters. Many of the contributed articles and much verse during the early years are of literary quality and not without interest to-day.

Notable among successive editors[1] were E. B. Soane (of whom more hereafter) and Mrs. Lorimer, wife of Lt.-Col. D. L. R. Lorimer, some time in charge of the ʿAmara *sanjaq*. Never was the paper better edited and less censored than under Mrs. Lorimer's régime, never were translations into Arabic better supervised: in her, as in Miss Gertrude Bell, the Administration had reason to congratulate itself on its feminine coadjutors.

A beginning was made during 1915 in organizing a civil medical department for the benefit of the local population. Major Norman Scott of the Indian Medical Service, who had long been Residency Surgeon at Baghdad, was the first Civil Surgeon at Basra, his appointment dating from 30th December 1914; his knowledge of the country and the language was subsequently of use at Baghdad. He was also in charge of the Civil Gaol, the state of which on our arrival at Basra was only less horrible than that of the Civil Hospital. Vermin, filth and a lack of the elementary decencies and necessities of life characterized both institutions. I can never pray, in the Litany, for prisoners and captives, without thinking of those places, as I saw them when they were first taken over, and of the fate of British and Indian prisoners taken at Kut. The horrors of the Turkish hospital, however, were paralleled by the condition of our own wounded in the winter of 1915–16.

A minor branch of the Administration, which scarcely affected the inhabitants of the wilayat, was that constituted during 1915 for the control of Hostile Trading Concerns. On the occupation of Basra we found in residence there a number of German employees of the firm of Wonckhaus, one of whom acted, in an honorary capacity and without extraterritorial privileges, as German Consul. They were sent to India for internment, and were followed, as related elsewhere, by their colleagues at Bahrain, Bushire, Ahwaz, and Mohammerah. It was necessary to arrange for the custody and disposal of their personal property and of the assets of the firm; their office and living quarters were requisitioned as billets as soon as the Force arrived and rent paid to the owner, a local landlord. In their warehouses were considerable quantities of goods; these were in due course sold, and the proceeds credited to the owners in the books of the Controller, who also collected outstandings. Stocks of commodities such as sugar, tea, barley, in the firm's possession were transferred at current prices to the Military Supply Departments; office furniture was likewise handed over, at a valuation, for which the Controller received credit, and the personal property of individuals was sold at auction, as had it been stored, however carefully, it would have so deteriorated as to be worthless to its owners. At Maʿqil lay a quantity of steel rails and sleepers, the property of the Baghdad Railway Company, which also owned river craft and some small buildings on the river bank. All this property had its value to the Force, but if endless subsequent controversy was to be avoided, it was necessary to bring it under unified control. The same considerations applied to the assets of the firm of Wonckhaus in the ports of the Persian Gulf and at Ahwaz, and the system was extended later on to the assets of firms of enemy nationality in the rest of ʿIraq. The post of Controller of Hostile Trading Concerns was held from 1917 until its abolition in 1920 by T. Carroll Wilson, who conducted the work with a minimum of friction.

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[1] The following is a list of editors in order of appointment: L. H. Branson, E. B. Soane, Mrs. Lorimer, D. V. MacCollum, E. Reid, D. G. Parry, Villiers Stuart, Pease, Cole, Bowen, Thorniley, D. W. Cameron. The last-named is (1930) editor of *The Baghdad Times*.

This is perhaps the place to refer briefly to the activities in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia of enemy firms. Candler (i. 253) insists that the firm of Wonckhaus existed primarily for anti-British intrigues and the furtherance of German military and political rather than commercial objects, and that its representatives were trained intelligence agents. This was the official military view at the time, but it was not well grounded. It is true that Herr Harling, the young agent of Wonckhaus at Bahrain, sent accurate details of the composition of the Indian Expeditionary Force to his people at Basra and Bushire by dhow four hours after its arrival. Yet what British merchant would have done less, and are we really supposed to believe that the 'accurate details' were secured at Bahrain? The probability is that they came from Bombay, where the world and his wife necessarily knew more or less what the Force was composed of and because it was dispatched without land transport could be fairly certain that its destination was Basra. Harling's colleagues at Bushire, Mohammerah, and Ahwaz were likewise doing no more than their obvious duty as patriotic citizens, and less than many of our own compatriots were doing all over the world. The fact that they had, like all Germans, undergone the usual military training before going abroad doubtless gave point to their observations and discretion to their reports; but a careful examination of the voluminous records of the firm's various branches lent no colour whatever to the supposition that its objects were other than commercial. Indirectly, perhaps, through the Hamburg-Amerika Company, of which they were the local agents, they received a subsidy from the State, and even this is by no means certain.

The action of the German Consular Corps in Persia and Mesopotamia was on very different lines: Herr Wassmuss, whose activities have already been mentioned, and Herr Listemann, whose physical infirmities prevented him from undertaking a roving commission like the remainder of his colleagues, were from the first 'all out' to raise Persians against us. They were led by Prince Henry of Reuss, a scion of one of the most ancient and famous houses in Germany. They were not squeamish as to the methods or agents they employed, nor did they differentiate between British military forces and British Consular officers and merchants. Wassmuss, styling himself German Consul-General at Shiraz, incited the tribes, very successfully, to raid Bushire; and Listemann's efforts, had they succeeded, would have led to a general massacre of British subjects. Their colleague at Isfahan, Herr Pugin, appointed Consul-General for the purposes of the war, was a truculent and not unsuccessful exponent of *Deutschtum*, but his methods were mild compared with the *Schrecklichkeit* of Seiler, Zugmayer, and Greisinger at Kirman and of other German war agents elsewhere in Persia. They were frankly out to eliminate all British and Russian influence in Persia, and whilst inciting all and sundry to kill, retained and paid bands of brigands for the specific purpose of killing. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the only British non-combatant to lose his life was our Vice-Consul at Shiraz, Ghulam ʿAli Khan, a member of the Nawab family, who was mortally wounded on 7th September. At Isfahan on 1st September the Russian Bank Manager at Isfahan was murdered and Mr. George Grahame, British Consul-General, wounded and one of his Indian cavalry escort killed.[1] On 12th July our detachment at Bushire was attacked by Tangistani tribesmen; in August action was taken against their head-quarters at Dilwar, twenty miles down the coast from Bushire, by a small combined force under Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Sir D. St. A. Wake, of the *Juno*, and Major Wintle of the 96th Berar Infantry. Tangistani dhows were sought out along the coast and destroyed. Simultaneously the *Pyramus* and *Dalhousie* went to Al Bidaʿ and forced the Turkish garrison to abandon the fort of Doha and to hand it over with its armament and munitions to the Shaikh of Qatar. In September our force at Bushire under General Brooking, which had been reinforced, was attacked by the Tangistanis once more; they showed courage and determination, and it was not until they were charged with the bayonet that they dispersed. In this engagement detachments of naval ratings from the *Juno*, *Pyramus*, and *Lawrence*, including some men of the R.M.L.I., played a creditable part.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 16.9.25. Mr. Grahame died in October 1922, *optime de suis meritus.*

Lt.-Col. (later Sir Frederick) O'Connor, our Consul at Shiraz, was captured on 10th October 1915, and held with the rest of the British colony at Ahram, as hostages for the return of German and Persian prisoners taken on Persian soil, a legitimate and in a measure successful measure of reprisal; they were released in August 1916, in exchange for certain Persians who had been deported earlier in the year. One of the captives, Mr. Pettigrew of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, died at Ahram of heart disease on 27th April 1916. The G.O.C. in Mesopotamia and his Chief Political Officer regarded these methods, from the first, as the logical expression of German military policy, and were content to counter them in the same spirit as best they could. On the escape of Wassmuss, in the circumstances already mentioned, Captain Noel had offered a reward for him, dead or alive. On learning this, the Government of India expressed their disapproval in no uncertain language: they required us to cancel the offer of a reward and to expunge it from the official record.[1] As the months passed, and the success of German intrigues threatened to embroil all Persia, they began to see things in a different light, and finally authorized us 'to attack and destroy Germans, wherever found'. The tangled history of German activities in Persia is beyond the scope of this work: the foregoing facts are quoted to show how slow were high officials of the Government of India to realize the true nature of the struggle in which we were involved.

It is not necessary, at this stage, to refer to other branches of the embryo civil administration which were started during this period: education had perforce to await the attainment of our military aims; the position did not permit of the extensive use of military postal and telegraphic services by the civil population, outside Basra, but Indian stamps, surcharged I.E.F. 'D', were issued for postal purposes within a very few months after our arrival.[2] In these as in other directions we were well served by the expert officials drawn from India, notably Captain E. Clerici, of the Indian Postal Department, and Mr. D. W. Gumbley of the Indian Telegraph Department. The telegraph service

[1] See also Marshall, p. 269.

[2] Details of successive local issues of postage stamps will be found in App. IV.

depended upon the cables of the Indo-European Telegraph Department, which ran from Fao to Bushire, and thence via Hanjam and Jask to Karachi, with branches to Bandar Abbas and Muscat. The staffs at these centres, depleted by war demands, were suddenly called upon to deal with an amount of traffic vastly exceeding the maximum for which the service was designed. Deprived of stimulating contact with the realities of war, and of its varied if often sordid pageantry; unable, by reason of their isolation, to participate in the wave of patriotism which swept British communities abroad and eventually aroused even in India a whole-hearted if sometimes ill-directed enthusiasm; yet they continued their unremitting labours in a spirit of unselfish devotion to which it is a privilege even at this distant date to bear witness. The Empire was never better served in the hour of need than in the Persian Gulf.

Finally, some reference must be made to the honourable part played at Basra by the staff of the American Presbyterian Mission under Dr. Bennett and the Reverend J. Van Ess, a United States citizen who had earned, during fifteen years' residence in the Persian Gulf and at Basra, the respect of every class of the community. The Mission[1] owned at Basra an excellent primary and secondary school, which continued to function during the war, and a small 'Lansing Memorial' hospital which was made available for the care of wounded prisoners of war at the very outset of the campaign; it was the only efficient medical unit that the Turks could rely on before the capture of Basra, and was worked under Red Crescent auspices until the occupation of the town by the British forces under General Barrett. Mr. Van Ess knew the local people, of all walks of life, far better than any member of the mercantile community, and his counsel and advice in local and general educational matters was of the greatest value. Whilst his nationality and profession required that he should stand apart from the conflict, he and his wife and their associates in the Mission were a valuable element in Basra and played throughout the campaign, as before and after it, a useful and honourable part. In January 1916 the entire staff of the Lansing Memorial Hospital contracted typhus from Turkish prisoners sent to them by the medical authorities as 'fever cases'. Mrs. Bennett died of the disease whilst nursing her husband, who narrrowly escaped a like fate. Of fifty-nine Turkish prisoners stricken with typhus, twelve died. The *Official Medical History* omits to mention either the services rendered by this hospital or the sad events to which it gave rise. Mr. Van Ess himself volunteered to conduct classes for the study of Arabic by the troops, which proved very popular and successful. He later wrote two manuals, *The Spoken Arabic of Meso-*

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[1] For a full account of this and other Missions see Mason and Barny.

potamia (1917) and *An Aid to Practical Written Arabic* (1920), which were printed 'for the Administration of the Territories of 'Iraq in British Occupation' by the Oxford University Press: these books, particularly the former, which was prescribed as the text-book for the 'Field Service Test' in Arabic, proved of the utmost value and are still much the best manuals on Arabic.

At the close of the year the 'gazetted' staff of the civil administration, excluding Sir Percy Cox and myself, consisted of the following officers in alphabetical order: C. C. J. Barrett, R. W. Bullard, H. R. P. Dickson, H. R. C. Dobbs, C. J. Edmonds, T. C. W. Fowle, E. G. Gregson, Lt.-Col. S. G. Knox, G. E. Leachman, C. F. Macpherson, C. F. Mackenzie, H. St. J. Philby, N. E. H. Scott, E. B. Soane, C. R. Watkins. With the exception of Watkins, all had a fluent knowledge of Arabic and had travelled in Arabic-speaking countries.

Sir HENRY R. C. DOBBS
K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.S.I., I.C.S.
Indian Political Dept.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD 1915

'We must get the upper hand, and if once we get that, we shall keep it with ease, and shall certainly succeed. But if we begin a long defensive warfare . . . and do not attack briskly, we shall soon be in distress.' DUKE OF WELLINGTON, *17th August* 1803.

The Shatt-al-Gharraf. Protection of Oil-fields. First battle of Kut. Decision to advance. Advance on Baghdad. Battle of Ctesiphon. Retreat from Ctesiphon.

WITH the occupation of Nasiriya, General Nixon had secured all the objectives originally assigned to his Force by the Government of India, namely the occupation of the Basra wilayat, and the safety of the Persian oil-fields, pipe-line, and refineries. His control of this region was not, however, in an administrative sense effective: the Bani Lam Arabs under Shaikh Ghadhban on the Tigris were still playing fast and loose with us, and the authority of the G.O.C. Nasiriya did not extend beyond the limits of the town and the immediate vicinity of the river banks. The desire of the Government of India to see Sir John Nixon in control of the administrative region known as the Basra wilayat was obviously due to other than purely strategic considerations, and was in accordance with his own view, of which he had never made a secret, and the view of the General Staff in India, that our ultimate objective should be Baghdad. He had already, on 24th June, advocated the occupation of Kut, 'which was only four miles beyond the limits of the Basra wilayat', for the reasons given above and on the more questionable ground that its occupation would prevent the Turks from threatening us on the Euphrates. It is difficult to see why, even with the imperfect knowledge of the terrain then at his disposal, he should have taken this view. It was known that Turkish troops and supplies had reached Nasiriya not only by way of the Hai, (or Shatt-al-Gharraf, as it is more generally called), and Shatra, but by river from Hilla in *shaktirs*—rectangular wooden boats holding about twenty men each; whereas no one had ever heard of a steamer getting from Kut to Nasiriya by the Hai, which Nixon knew to be virtually dry for six months in the year.

The late Mr. J. G. Lorimer, I.C.S., whose death by a tragic accident at Bushire in February 1914 deprived the Government of India of one of its most brilliant servants, had investigated the nature and present condition of the Shatt-al-Gharraf; and the result of his personal inquiries, conducted during the years 1902–6, was on record in his classic *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, 1908. Nothing that he wrote, nor the article by H. W. Cadoux in the *Geographical Journal* for September 1906, attributed any practical value to this stream for military purposes, and General Gorringe's investigations demonstrated in a very short time that the views previously held at General Head-quarters on this subject were erroneous. By advancing to Kut we should roughly double the length of our lines of communication; no additional river transport was at the time available, or even on order, and the amount of pack transport at our disposal was wholly inadequate for extended movements by land. Such considerations appear to have weighed little with General Nixon, whose motto was *l'audace, toujours l'audace.* His views found enthusiastic support at Army Head-quarters in India, who suggested that as reinforcements were not available in India a Brigade might be borrowed from Aden for a few months. The Secretary of State for India was less enamoured of the project; he disapproved of Aden lending a Brigade, urged caution, emphasized the importance of protecting the oil-fields, and suggested that reinforcements might be provided by evacuating Nasiriya for a time—a policy curiously out of accord with the Government of India's expressed desire to control the whole wilayat. To these exhortations General Nixon replied, disapproving on sound grounds of the evacuation of Nasiriya, which as matters turned out he would have done well not to have occupied; recommending a policy of subsidies to tribesmen in South Persia to protect the oil-fields, and the withdrawal of troops from Ahwaz, and claiming that an advance to Baghdad was the best remedy for present and future disorders in Persia. The India Office then gave up the unequal contest, and agreed to the proposed advance to Kut. A wireless station, which had been ordered before the war for Abadan, was sent to the oil-fields and erected on 19th September. The subsidies to the Bawi tribe were, however, never paid, as Sir Percy Cox, who had not been consulted when they were proposed, pointed out that they would weaken the Shaikh of Mohammerah's authority, and would serve no useful purpose now that the Turkish menace was disposed of. It was clear that Whitehall and Simla viewed the functions of our forces in Mesopotamia from different angles. To the former, their duty was to protect the oil wells and to adopt a passive policy in what was at the time, and might well have remained, a secondary theatre of war. To A. H. Q. in India the campaign was apparently a major offensive with Baghdad as the objective, provided that the necessary extra division could be found.

What the British or Indian Empire would do with Baghdad when they got it had no doubt been fully considered, but no inkling of the trend of official thought on the subject reached us in Mesopotamia, and the Official Historian is completely silent on the point. The

Viceroy had written (vide p. 17) that nothing could be done without full discussion with our Allies and with the Arabs; Sir Percy Cox had said (p. 65) that if we accepted Arab co-operation on the understanding that the Turkish regime had disappeared for good we could not allow its return. The officials of Whitehall were silent, being doubtless far too intent on the titanic struggle in other theatres of war, and in the vast preparations for its future prosecution that 1915 showed to be requisite, to give thought to the hypothetical issues thus raised, almost incidentally, around the military aspects of what the War Office still looked on as a protective campaign or, at most, a flank attack on Turkey.

The Turks, on the other hand, had furnished every inducement to Sir John Nixon to press for the seizure of Kut. Notwithstanding the events that had followed their retirement from Ahwaz, they had won to their side once more the fickle but at that time powerful Ghadhban, and they had taken advantage of our temporary evacuation on 20th July of Kumait, twenty-eight miles above ʿAmara (we had occupied it on 3rd July), to hold it for a few days. We retorted by occupying ʿAli Gharbi on 1st August, but the Turks held Shaikh Saʿad with a small detachment: their whole force at this date consisted of some 5,000 rifles and 19 guns at Kut, with 2,000 men on their way from Nasiriya and 2,700 men at Baghdad.

General Townshend, who had spent some months in India on sick leave, returned to Basra on 21st August. He gives in his book (Ch. VI) an interesting account of the impressions he received whilst at Simla. He says that he recorded in his diary that he 'gathered that we were to advance on Baghdad', but he nowhere gives the grounds on which he formed this impression. On the contrary, the Foreign Department were against it, unless more than adequate forces were available, and so was Sir Beauchamp Duff, whom he found overworked and tired.[1] 'What I want,' he said to General Townshend, 'is a senior general in whom I have absolute confidence as regards loyalty and ability, who can be a sort of deputy Commander-in-Chief and carry on the work for me at times, while I have a short holiday.' General Townshend adds the following comment, which defies annotation but deserves repetition: 'He had no one answering to this description.'

On 23rd August General Townshend received from Sir John Nixon his instructions to destroy and disperse the enemy and occupy Kut, 'thereby consolidating our control of the Basra wilayat'. His force consisted of some 3,000 British and 8,000 Indian troops, with 32 guns, together with four seaplanes which had just arrived from East Africa where they had been operating with success against the *Königsberg* on the Rufiji River. He was very short of land transport, and had no water-carts. The heat was still very great, rising to 120° in small tents and 110° in the shade for hours a day. Opposed to him, holding a position astride the Tigris 8 miles below Kut, were some 6,000 rifles and 38 guns under Nur-ud-Din Bey. On 28th September the attack commenced, which culminated in the battle of As Sinn: we captured 1,289 Turks and killed or wounded 1,700, ourselves losing 1,229 in killed and wounded. The Naval flotilla co-operated as effectively as usual, and a notable incident was the gallant attempt of Lt.-Com. Cookson, R.N., of H.M.S. *Comet* to destroy the boom laid across the river at As Sinn: he fell riddled with bullets before he could achieve his object, and was awarded a posthumous V.C.[1] It was a brilliant action, depending on the element of surprise, which was complete. It was not, however, as successful as our previous victories. Had General Townshend's plans been successfully developed on the lines laid down by him, the main portion, if not the whole, of the Turkish force then in Mesopotamia would have been captured or destroyed and Baghdad might have been entered without further resistance. General Nixon was with General Townshend during the whole battle and would probably have authorized such an advance, which, as we have already seen, was never absent from his mind or that of General Townshend, though whether we could have held Baghdad in the absence of either land or river transport is very doubtful. It would seem, therefore, that the failure of General Townshend's force, owing primarily to the shortage of land transport, to capture the whole Turkish force was a turning-point, perhaps decisive, in the course of the campaign. Baghdad was the glittering prize to which all eyes were turned: to enter it would have, it was felt, as great an effect as the occupation of Constantinople; it would have turned the scale in Persia, and perhaps in Afghanistan, and might have had, at this period, even wider repercussions. The story has been fully dealt with in the *Official History* and in Townshend's book, and no attempt will here be made to evaluate the relative responsibility of those in whose hands the decision lay. The India Office had been from the first doubtful as to the wisdom of an advance on Baghdad, and had actually given orders, which were communicated to Sir John Nixon on 6th October, that the advance should cease. Lord Kitchener, too, was opposed to the idea, laying special emphasis on the

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[1] He died in Jan. 1918. At his best he had been one of the most brilliant writers on military subjects of his generation, but the four years he spent at the India Office (1910–13) had confirmed his sedentary habits. As Commander-in-Chief, in succession to Sir N. O'More Creagh, he never moved from G.H.Q., and lost touch with the senior generals in the Army. His staff surrounded him as with a *zariba*, and the gradual failure of his powers was only slowly realized even by the Viceroy.

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[1] *London Gazette*, 21st January 1916.

Photo by Central Press

LIEUT.-COMMANDER EDGAR C. COOKSON
V.C., D.S.O.

Killed in action, 28th Sept. 1915

disadvantages of the long and imperfect line of communication.[1] But the Cabinet fell a victim to the attractions of Baghdad; like Jerusalem it stood out enticingly in the perfect map of the imagination.

The private telegrams received by the Viceroy at this juncture from his official chiefs have never been published, and do not appear to have been placed before the Mesopotamia Commission. There is, however, good reason for thinking that their tenour was such that the Viceroy dared not take the responsibility of vetoing the advance.

Things were going badly in Europe: our position in Gallipoli was precarious, and the Germans seemed likely before long to be in direct touch with Constantinople. Baghdad would be a valuable offset to losses elsewhere. An inter-departmental Committee appointed to consider the question was not composed of the highest authorities, nor was it able to weigh all the facts. It misunderstood the state of the transport on the Tigris, owing to a wrong reading of a telegram from Sir John Nixon. The Committee reported that the occupation of Baghdad was most desirable if the necessary reinforcements could be assured. No mention was made of transport needs, by land or water. The War Office agreed to spare two Divisions from France, and on 24th October, long before the Divisions had even started, General Nixon was authorized to advance on Baghdad. On 2nd November the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith),[2] speaking in the House of Commons, said: 'General Nixon's force is now within measurable distance of Baghdad. I do not think that in the whole war there has been a series of operations more carefully contrived, more brilliantly conducted, and with a better prospect of final success.'

On 21st October the Viceroy was informed in a 'private' telegram that the War Office estimated that perhaps 60,000 Turks would be opposing us in Mesopotamia in January 1916. This anticipation was not, however, communicated by the War Office to the Chief of the General Staff in India, who relied, very properly, on the War Office for periodical appreciations of the military situation. Had it been communicated to General Nixon, he might have modified his plans, for, short as he was of transport of every kind, it was certain that the

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[1] Robertson, p. 272.

[2] Yet just six months earlier on 25th March 1915 he had written in his diary:

'Grey and I . . . both think that in the real interests of our own future the best thing would be if at the end of the War we could say that we had taken and gained nothing, and this not from a merely moral and sentimental point of view. Taking Mesopotamia, for instance, means spending millions in irrigation and development with no immediate or early return, keeping up quite a large army in an unfamiliar country, tackling every kind of tangled administrative question worse than any we have ever had in India, with a hornets' nest of Arab tribes, and even if that were all set right having a perpetual menace on our flank in Kurdistan.' (*Memories and Reflections*, 1928, vol. ii, p. 69.)

Turkish reinforcements would be on the spot before ours. The India Office have been blamed for sending the news 'privately' to the Viceroy, and the latter has been blamed for not informing General Nixon. The criticism is beside the point: it is the business of the War Office to conduct war, and it was the recognized duty of the War Office to communicate whatever information they thought reliable to India for Sir John Nixon's guidance. A few days before the battle of Ctesiphon, the War Office wired that 30,000 troops had left Bitlis, and that Von der Goltz[1] was on his way to Baghdad. General Nixon, however, refused to credit the news; military and strategical factors were, in truth, ignored and political considerations arising out of the position in Europe allowed to predominate. No doubts assailed the minds of the attacking troops themselves: victorious in successive fights, toughened by sun and wind, the British and Indian units full of mutual confidence, there was never any ground for General Townshend's claim that 'their tails were slightly down', or that 'they were looking over their shoulders'. We have the testimony of General Melliss and of other commanders that the morale of the whole force remained high to the last, and that flesh and blood could not have done more than was done by the rank and file.

General Nixon's first step was to order a concentration at ʿAziziya, which was effected on 10th October: further troops arrived in due course, and on 19th November the advance against the Turkish position at Ctesiphon began. Whether it was his intention to 'open the road to Baghdad', as he has himself suggested, or whether he hoped to capture and occupy the place, as desired by India and, not without some misgivings, by the Cabinet in London advised by a not very well chosen committee, does not appear from the record. Two days later, on 21st November, Lajj was taken, and Townshend pressed on to the arch of Ctesiphon, 16 miles from Baghdad. Hard by is the reputed tomb of Salmán Pák[2]—Salmán the Pure—an Islamic shrine of great sanctity. On 22nd November, at daybreak, Townshend attacked. The Turks had everything in their favour; their position was well chosen

[1] He died at Baghdad in June 1916, and was buried on the river bank outside the South Gate; after the war the remains were removed to Germany.

[2] Salmán al Fárisi, a companion of the Prophet, and one of the most popular figures of Muslim legend: he is represented in history as having been converted to Christianity and to have died in 35 A.H.: his memory is venerated by all Muslims and especially by Shiʿahs. Recent traditions represent him as having been the Prophet's barber, and a barber is to this day called *Salmáni* in many Islamic countries. Other traditions locate his tomb at Isfahan and at Ludd in Palestine. General Townshend stated in private letters that his Indian Muslim soldiers did not like the prospect of fighting in this vicinity, but there is no evidence apart from his book that these feelings existed outside the ranks of a single Indian regiment recruited largely from trans-frontier Afghans.

and very strong tactically; it included the 'High Wall' of Al Mada'in, a great embankment some 25 feet high. Only a frontal attack was possible, and if this succeeded the enemy could retreat to the Diyala where, as we learned in 1917, the facilities for defence were excellent. The Turkish army numbered some 20,000 men and was in a position to force an attack. The Turks had a boat bridge across the Tigris upstream of their second line, and one across the Diyala: the Arabs were active in assisting them and in hanging on our flanks. To retire without engaging the enemy at this juncture was a course no longer open to the British Commander. Being short of guns, he was unable to arrange adequate artillery preparation, but such was the spirit animating the force, and the dash with which the assault was made, that it succeeded beyond expectation. The chances were weighted against General Townshend in all respects save one—the discipline and personal valour of the troops he commanded. The front trenches were taken, at heavy loss in killed and wounded, with the bayonet, and the Turkish troops fled in disorder to the second line, a mile to the rear; this was also stormed and taken, and the attack, which had not yet spent its force, flowed on to the Turkish batteries in the rear: eight guns fell into our hands. By 11 a.m. victory seemed within our grasp: we reached the Arch and for twenty-four hours defended it and the vicinity. Of the gallantry displayed in those crowded hours it is impossible to read or to speak without emotion: the stern valour of our troops would have graced Thermopylae. The brunt of the fighting fell upon the 30th Infantry Brigade under Climo. The assault was headed by the Dorsets (who belonged to another Brigade). The 76th Punjabis and the 2/7th Gurkhas were no whit inferior in courage and dash to their British brothers-in-arms: so dreadful had been the slaughter that their bodies lay thick on the ground, intermingled with those of Turkish soldiers, many of whom fought hand to hand to the end. All who went forward had long been without food and many were wounded, for the medical arrangements were mismanaged as usual, and the General Staff, with a confidence which, if General Townshend's book is to be believed, was greater than that of their chief, gave instructions that all walking wounded were to be evacuated forwards *into* Baghdad.[1] Naval co-operation had proved impossible, as the Turkish heavy guns on the river prevented the advance of our lightly armed and altogether unarmed vessels. The Cavalry also suffered severely, losing 200 killed and wounded out of 1,200 sabres. The casualties among British and Indian officers were especially heavy, and control became difficult, for the Indian battalions were composed in great part of raw recruits and the British battalions were only at half war strength. Hoghton's

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[1] *Official Medical History*, iv. 202.

Brigade consisted of 700 men, Delamain's 1,000, Hamilton's 800 or 900; of 12,000 men we had lost 4,200 killed and wounded, and had gained a Pyrrhic victory. Of 317 British officers, 130 had been killed or wounded; the Oxfords had only 6 and the Dorsets and Norfolks 9 officers left. The 110th Mahrattas had 1 officer, the 104th Rifles 2; the 66th Punjabis, 117th Mahrattas and the 2/7th Gurkhas 4 each. Of 235 Indian officers only 111 were left; the casualties among the staff were heavy. The 24th, 104th, and 110th Indian regiments had lost more than half their strength. We had, on the other hand, inflicted some 9,600 casualties on the enemy and captured 1,200 men.

The following night was, for many, one of supreme agony; for all, one of misery: the wounded were collected in springless mule carts whose progress over the rough ground evoked from their occupants cries and groans of agony which struck horror into their surviving comrades. Most of them had been without water all day, and all were chilled to the bone with the cold night breeze. The four field ambulances available were equipped to deal with four hundred casualties: they had to cope that day with almost ten times that number. 'Regardless of personal danger the medical staff worked during and after the battle till they were fit to drop with fatigue in alleviating the suffering of friends and foes alike.'[1] Two days were occupied in removing the casualties to the waiting steamers, on which they were crowded, unmurmuring, like cattle.

At about mid-day (22nd Nov.) the tide turned: General Hamilton with the Norfolks and the 110th Light Infantry had managed to get a footing in the second position of the Turks. He was soon held and could get no further, for at this moment the Turks, under Jevad Bey, counter-attacked vigorously. Colonel Climo, twice wounded, held the enemy till about 2 p.m.: at about 2.15 he was wounded a third time and carried to the rear. General Delamain collected a small band of sixty men, consisting of signallers, orderlies, and a few odd parties, and went in support of Hamilton; joining with the 7th Rajputs under Colonel Parr, who had suffered heavily, he launched an attack on the Turkish trenches three hundred yards in front. Again the Turks counter-attacked and Delamain, covered by our guns, had to retire. General Hoghton hastened with the remnants of his Brigade to Delamain's support; he could only collect some 250 men, made up of detachments from 6 different battalions, of whom 60 were British. He got within 300 yards of the enemy and held on till dark, when enemy reinforcements compelled him to withdraw. At dusk, too, the Cavalry Brigade withdrew with its armoured cars, which throughout the day had done very good work. A final attempt to push forward was made by General Hamilton, who led the attack in person, but before this was fully developed orders to break off the battle were received from General Townshend, who decided to concentrate with a view to renewing the attack next morning.

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[1] Sandes.

The Turks were likewise in evil case: their casualties had been more than twice as heavy as ours and there were no reinforcements except two battalions hurried from the Diyala. When Townshend broke off the battle, they were glad to do likewise: their 45th division, which had borne the burden of the day, was a mere skeleton: Nur-ud-Din withdrew to his second line, in readiness to retire on the Diyala.

Convinced, erroneously as we now know, that the Turks had received reinforcements; realizing that his troops were in no condition to join battle afresh, burdened with a very large number of wounded, to remove whom demanded all the transport he had; without water, supplies, or reserve ammunition—General Townshend decided to concentrate during 23rd November on the 'High Wall'. The weather did not favour him: a violent gale blew without intermission from dawn to dusk, bringing with it clouds of dust which made communication difficult and adequate observation impossible. Realizing Townshend's plight, Nur-ud-Din attacked: his guns shelled our rear, disorganizing the transport and adding to the miseries of our wounded, who were being removed, six in a cart.[1] The attack continued all night: General Hoghton was short of ammunition but managed to hold his own. Delamain repulsed between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. six furious attacks, during which groups of the men came within a few yards of our trenches. At 4 a.m. they withdrew.

There was no firing when the sun rose on the 24th, but further and yet more severe trials were in store for the sorely-tried troops, who, be it remembered, were, so far as Indian units were concerned, mainly recruits of eighteen months' service, and not well trained at that, for the pick of the depots had been sent to France. The British units were mainly composed of well-trained men, but they too had been depleted by earlier battles, and included much raw material. Both sides were exhausted and neither was able to make a proper reconnaissance. Nur-ud-Din, misled by reports, issued orders for a retreat to the Diyala, which was carried out during the night of the 24th, but a fresh advance was made on the 25th on the receipt of news of our movements. Townshend, believing that the Turks had been heavily reinforced, and having regard to the heavy casualties he had incurred, and his own lack of transport and supplies, decided to retire to Lajj, which he reached before dawn on the 26th. On the 27th, pressed by the Turks, now commanded by Khalil Pasha, he retreated down river, leaving at 4 p.m. and reaching ʿAziziya at 5 a.m. on the 28th. His movements were reported to the Turks by their airmen—the first to serve on this front. After two days' rest at ʿAziziya, where he had to abandon a quantity of supplies, Townshend left for Kut on the morning of the 30th. That night the two forces came in contact, but after an exchange of shots hostilities ceased till dawn when the armies found themselves within 1½ miles of each other and at once fell to: the Turks were beaten off and the retirement continued, the enemy casualties during the day being 700 to our 500. It was perhaps in this rear-guard action at Umm-ut-Tubul that General Townshend showed himself at his best: it was a fine example of a successful counter-stroke during a retreat under extraordinary difficulties. In other directions we lost severely, for the Turks, who had been able to get their guns down to the river bank, began to shell our naval flotilla. The *Shaitan* had previously been lost, as she had gone hard aground and could not be refloated. The *Firefly* and *Comet* were set on fire and abandoned, with several barges and launches. The crews were taken off under heavy rifle fire at 50 yards range by the *Sumana*. On one of the abandoned barges were 380 sick and wounded men, some of whom were later sent back to Townshend, as the Turks had too many of their own wounded to be able to give them attention. Sandes writes (p. 102):

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[1] A fortnight later the Secretary of State for India, misled by the cynically false statements telegraphed by General Nixon's staff, informed the House of Commons that the general condition of the wounded was very satisfactory and that the medical arrangements worked well under circumstances of considerable difficulty.

> 'H.M.S. *Firefly* might perhaps have been sunk by the *Sumana's* 12 pr. gun, but aboard the *Firefly* lay a poor fellow in the engine room, still alive but terribly scalded by the escaping steam. His state was so dreadful that it was impossible to move him, so he was given a merciful dose of morphia and left in the ship. His presence on board the *Firefly*, however, deterred his friends from shelling her, nor was there much leisure to do so, even if humanitarian considerations had not prevailed.'

Such considerations, in such circumstances, should not have prevented the sinking of the *Firefly*, which the Turks were able to use with effect against Kut a few weeks later; she was recaptured by us in the advance on Baghdad on 26th February 1917, not far from the bend in the river where she was lost. A writer in the *Naval Review*, vol. iv, who gives an account, clearly from personal knowledge, of these operations, states that after the breech-blocks of the *Firefly's* guns were removed, and the engines disabled, the survivors were taken off by the *Sumana*. He does not mention the incident described by Sandes. When, however, the ship was recaptured, the guns were found in good condition, and the engines in effective working order. It seems that the spare breech-blocks on board had been overlooked. The *Firefly* was invaluable to the Turks and it is to be regretted that means were not devised for destroying her utility more effectively.

The retreat continued during the 1st and 2nd December, and Kut was entered early on the 3rd: the Turks had been out-distanced and our only assailants were the Arabs,[1] who harried the columns, pillaging and killing stragglers in the darkness and harrying the field ambulance when they got a chance. All ranks were completely exhausted by this 44 miles' march carried out in 36 hours, without sufficient food or water. Even sleep, when opportunity offered, was difficult, for the cold was intense. It would be difficult to find in the stirring annals of the British and Indian armies the record of finer achievement.

Expert military critics, reviewing the series of engagements that constituted the battle of Ctesiphon, have pointed out the absence of any general reserve, the lack of accurate information (on either side), and the fact that at no time was there adequate artillery support at any one spot, to which cause they ascribe the heavy casualties among our infantry. They point out that one-third of the distance was covered in the first 5 days of the retreat, and the remainder in 2½ days—since touch had been lost with the enemy, thanks primarily to the reliance placed on necessarily imperfect aeroplane reconnaissance. It has further been remarked that, as in the battle of As Sinn, General Nixon, the Corps Commander, with his staff, was present with Townshend during the approach to and the battle of Ctesiphon—a very unsatisfactory state of affairs which was accentuated by the fact that General Head-quarters had under-estimated the strength of the enemy by 50 per cent., and rejected Townshend's estimate of 20,000—now known to be accurate, though he put the figure at 10,000 in his Operation Orders. Such criticisms have their place in the literature of war, but must be weighed in the balance against the appalling difficulties in which the Commander was placed. Whilst, in the light of knowledge acquired after study of the ground and of Turkish records, Sir John Nixon might have done better, it is also clear that nothing would have enabled him to gain the victory. An undaunted soldier, grown grey in arms in the service of his country, his impetuosity in the face of the enemy in the darkest days of the war was his undoing. Yet no subsequent Commander in

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[1] On 13th December the Secretary of State for India informed the House of Commons that he had every reason to believe that the (German) statements that friendly Arabs had turned against the British troops during this action was quite untrue. The statement was in its literal sense correct, for the Arabs in question were not and never had been friendly, but it was misleading.

Mesopotamia, except General Maude, possessed in so ample degree the affection of all ranks, British and Indian. The spirit which animated him and his Brigadiers permeated the staff and the regimental officers, brought renewed strength and determination to the rank and file, and enabled the force to face with fortitude the further ordeals through which it was destined to pass, alas! in vain.

CHAPTER VII

THE SIEGE AND FALL OF KUT.[1]

Defences of town prepared. Question of expulsion of inhabitants. Mismanagement of supplies. Food dropped from aeroplanes. Negotiations for surrender. Surrender and ill-treatment of Garrison.

ON 3rd December General Townshend's force, consisting of some 7,500 bayonets, 1,500 sabres, and 39 guns, 'retired', to use the words of the Press communiqué, 'to the fortified line of Kut-al-Amara': extra rations were issued for some days to the troops, whose whole energies were concentrated on constructing the above-mentioned fortified line, which had up to that moment never been thought of. It is stated by eye-witnesses that these extra rations were supplemented by extensive pilfering and even pillaging of the ration dumps by British and Indian soldiers when they first reached Kut—conduct which General Townshend seems to have winked at or ignored. Much precious food was thus wasted. The area to be defended on the left bank was roughly 3,200 yards by 2,700 yards, and, on the right bank, west of the Shatt-al-Gharraf, the Liquorice Factory which contained a large amount of grain. The decision to hold this outlying post longer than was necessary to remove the grain has been unfavourably criticized (*C.S.* 227). The ground was very hard, and the men were very short of picks: the work had to be done under Turkish fire to which, in the desire to husband ammunition, our men could not reply: nevertheless by the end of the siege some 30 miles of trenches had been dug.

In the town were 5,000 to 6,000 Arabs: Sir Percy Cox, who had accompanied General Nixon, remained at Kut after General Nixon left, and offered to remain with Townshend, who, however, rightly decided that his services would be wasted there, once the siege began. Before Sir Percy left Townshend asked for a statement of his views as to the disposal of the Arab population of Kut. 'The first thing to be done, according to strict military principles was to turn them out.' Sir Percy replied that while recognizing that the question must be determined by considerations of military necessity, he felt bound to remind General

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[1] For the events narrated in this as in previous chapters, I have drawn on the *Official History* and on the *Critical Study* referred to in the Bibliography, with a freedom which can be justified only by the fact that, unlike those narratives, this work is intended for the general reader. The same consideration has made it necessary to abbreviate, sometimes perhaps at the expense of accuracy, the very full accounts available in these publications, and nowhere else, of military and naval operations of absorbing interest. I have also referred to Barber, Bishop, Mousley, Herbert, Keeling, Sandes, Still, and Townshend.

Townshend that in view of the wintry weather and bitterly cold nights, most of the women and children so expelled would perish in the desert of cold and starvation (*O.H.* ii. 163). General Townshend finally decided to allow all *bona fide* householders to remain, and to expel only some 700 strangers. (It was not his first siege, for he had taken part in the defence of Chitral in 1895 and in his published writings had made the most of the fact.) Herbert (p. 209) writing on 13th April applauds in his diary this decision, but more than any other single factor it appears to have been responsible for the ultimate surrender of the town, for a loss of human life far exceeding the total population of the town, and for the untold and unthinkable miseries of an even greater number. Sir Charles Townshend, in his book (p. 229), attributes the decision, which he afterwards regretted, to the 'intercession' of Sir Percy Cox; and, writing doubtless from memory, gives a wholly incorrect version of that officer's advice, which was not given unasked but in response to a plain question. Sir Percy Cox in his reply made no reference to the political effect in Mesopotamia of the decision to expel the inhabitants, but General Townshend explains that he himself 'considered that it would have a disastrous political effect among the Arab population, whom we had engaged to protect against the Turk'. The first part of this sentence is a statement of opinion on a matter for which Townshend was not responsible and of which he was not competent to judge; the second half is incorrect: we had entered into no such engagement either implicitly or by proclamation. The true reason for the decision to hold Kut was, as stated in the *Official History*, that the force was too exhausted to go further. General Townshend sent Captain Leachman, 'a very good fellow, whom everybody likes, which is rare',[1] out of Kut with the Cavalry Brigade on 6th December,[2] and in consequence had no independent political officer of experience and adequate status whom he could consult in dealing with the Arab population. Some were expert thieves, and twelve were shot by court-martial for pillaging stores; others were in communication with the enemy. As a precaution he held some of the leading men in custody as hostages and threatened to shoot them if there was the least sign of treachery, a proceeding ill calculated to secure his object and little likely to deter evilly-disposed persons from hostile activities, for the hostages once under lock and key were unable to influence their fellow citizens. Townshend failed to grasp the nettle not once, but twice: his statement that he was afraid to search the Arabs' houses until relief appeared doubtful, lest a bad political effect should result, shows a profound misunderstanding of Arab psychology: Arabs are realists, accustomed to give and take hard knocks, and after the hectic experience of the past months a vigorous search would have had little significance for them nor could their feelings have been of any military importance. Orders were indeed given for full details of available supplies to be prepared, and in the default of a house-to-house search, an estimate was furnished which led to the disastrous, because premature, battles of Shaikh Sa'ad, Wadi, and Hanna, for General Aylmer was told that supplies in Kut would not last beyond about 15th April. On 18th January Townshend wired: 'I have twenty-two days' food left, but by collecting all the flour in the town and eating up all the horses,[1] we can last much longer.' On 20th January he wired that he had eighty-four days' food left!

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[1] Herbert, p. 210.

[2] They were, as usual, harried on their southward march by the local Arabs.

The fighting spirit of the troops was high at the commencement of the siege, and justifiably so, for they had defeated the Turks at Ctesiphon in circumstances of almost unparalleled difficulty. Apart from the remnants of the formations that had borne the brunt of the fighting, the defending force included the Oxfords, who maintained their reputation as one of the old 'Light Brigade', and a Volunteer Battery composed largely of Anglo-Indians recruited in the great cities of India, many of them raw youths. They displayed, more especially in the heavy attack on 24th December, qualities of endurance and of courage worthy of the best traditions of a famous regiment. As the siege drew to its inevitable close, spirits sometimes flagged, for the bow had been kept too long and too tightly strung and it threatened to snap, but at no time was the morale of the force as low as is represented by General Townshend in his book. All contemporary narratives and the personal experiences of survivors agree as to this, though there are not lacking those who feel that the spirits of the troops could have been raised by visits from the Commander, who was very rarely seen. Desertions were few, and the childish leaflets dropped by Turkish aeroplanes urging the Indian troops to desert and announcing ridiculous items of war news seem to have left those sepoys who saw them entirely unmoved.

The ammunition supply, which gave anxiety when the siege began, proved ample, thanks to the comparatively passive tactics adopted by the Turks. Much was left at the end and ineffectively disposed of by dumping in the river, whence large quantities were salved by the Turks and used against us in the form of land mines.

The Turks began to close in and made several assaults which were not, however, pressed; brilliant as had been their behaviour at

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[1] It was difficult to induce the Indian troops, especially the Hindus, to eat horse-flesh; and few did so till 13th April, by which time their abstention had greatly depleted the supply of grain and weakened their health.

Ctesiphon, the attacking force showed little enterprise during the siege; a desultory bombardment of the town was maintained, and Arab women and children going to the Tigris for water were freely shot at, both by Turks and Arab irregulars. The hospital was bombarded both by artillery fire and from the air, in the latter case with terrible effect. Bishop (p. 29) quotes the indefatigable Army Chaplain of Kut (Rev. H. Spooner) as saying that 'no sight he had witnessed at Ctesiphon could be compared to that hospital ward'. The casualties up to the end of the year amongst the defending force had been 1,774; by 1st February they totalled 2,240.

On 17th January the situation changed for the worse: the relief force under General Aylmer totalling 9,000 men made desperate attempts to break through and failed, suffering 7,000 casualties; three days later heavy rain made movement in any direction impossible. Thenceforward it was clear that the Turks intended to do no more than blockade Kut; two thousand men were in fact withdrawn from Kut for operations in Persia. Aylmer made further attempts, as described in the next chapter, but with similar results. A sortie by the Kut garrison was discussed, but opinion was against it; the possibility of defeat had not yet been considered by Army Head-quarters, and it was considered that even had 4,000 men been passed across the right bank to Shaikh Saʿad where the Turks were weak, and joined the relieving force, the remaining 3,000 could scarcely have held Kut. Sorties to be successful must be kept secret to the last moment; there were enemy agents in the town, both professional and amateur, and many individuals escaped by swimming the river. The possibility of a successful sortie was in any case discounted by the destruction of the bridge across the Tigris on 9th December, a week after the arrival of General Townshend, who felt himself unable to hold the bridge-head on the right bank. It was blown up at great personal risk by Lieutenants Matthews and Sweet, who each received the D.S.O., with volunteers from the 2/7th Gurkhas and Sappers and Miners, but in the process the greater part of the material was lost: with it Townshend lost the power to make a fresh bridge, so to detain as many Turks as possible, for knowing that he could not cross the river, they reduced the containing force to a minimum.

On 1st February rations were reduced by half: on 9th March they were still further reduced to a mere subsistence allowance on which the garrison maintained life, with a steady increase of sickness, till its surrender on 29th April. One looks in vain in General Townshend's book, or in the fairly extensive literature of the siege, for any references to an attempt to make a scientific apportionment of the available food, either amongst the various types of men comprising the force or amongst the Arab population: horses and mules (Bishop, p. 28, says

Photo by Bassano

Maj.-Gen. Sir CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND
K.C.B., D.S.O.
Died 18th May 1924

mules were best) were not utilized as extensively as they might have been. Barber (p. 153) mentions that one officers' mess warmed themselves for several days at a fire made of Turkish army biscuits. There was a substantial quantity of fuel oil available, which was issued in lieu of wood, and this, Barber says, saved the situation as far as fuel was concerned, but for some time it was clumsily and wastefully used. Hidden stores were constantly being brought to light, and it was not till Aylmer had incurred 7,000 casualties in making a premature attack that a systematic survey of the stores of food in the town was made. As has already been seen, General Townshend, for political reasons of which he was not the best judge, did not expel the inhabitants: in the same manner he rejected the advice of two Brigadier-Generals of the Indian Army, with great experience of Indian troops, as to the attitude to be adopted with regard to the consumption by the latter of horse-flesh. General Melliss was in favour almost from the first of issuing definite orders to Indian troops that they must eat horse-flesh: General Delamain took the same view, but General Townshend considered it too drastic a measure. Both Generals held that the Divisional Commander's optimistic announcements strengthened the men's determination to abstain from the unaccustomed food. The requisite religious dispensation was obtained, and the Indian officers did their best, but in vain: the troops were to the end convinced that the siege would be raised in time.

On 12th April Brigadier-General Hoghton died, poisoned by some herbs which were being freely gathered at this time to allay the pangs of hunger and the miseries of scurvy by the Indian troops, many of whom shared his fate. 'Yet', writes Barber, 'although we had to feed some hundreds of the Arab population—many of them gratuitously—few ever showed signs of starvation, even up to the end. The children, fat as butter, showed no sign of shortage of food.'[1] Little attempt was made to grow vegetables, though one garden, started by Major Cotton, who died a prisoner at Baghdad, supplied considerable quantities to hospitals.

During the last days of the siege, on the night of 24th April, a gallant attempt was made to send a ship loaded with 270 tons of food up the Tigris to Kut. The *Julnar* was selected and manned by a volunteer crew[2] under Commander Firman, R.N., and Lt.-Com. Cowley, R.N.V.R., of the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company's service, who had spent thirty-three years in navigating the Tigris. The ship was stopped by cables stretched across the river under the fire of Turkish guns, went aground, and was captured. Both Firman and Cowley lost their lives and both received posthumous V.C.'s.[1] 'The writer of this diary', writes Herbert (p. 223), 'had many heroic pictures in his mind, but no more heroic picture, and no more glowing memory than the little *Julnar* steaming slowly up the flaming Tigris to meet the Turkish army and her fate.' Whether Cowley was killed on the bridge or shot afterwards by the Turks was for long unknown. The Turks said at first that he was found dead on the *Julnar*, which the survivors of the crew, including Engineer Sub.-Lt. Reed, R.N.R., denied; later the Turks said that he was shot by the escort when attempting to escape, the oldest of campaigning lies. Inquiries made after the capture of Baghdad make it certain (the *Official History* notwithstanding) that, as stated by Mousley, he was captured unwounded and done to death subsequently by order of Nur-ud-Din on the pretext that he was a Turkish subject, though Barber (p. 230) quotes a Turkish officer as stating that he and Firman were given a military funeral in recognition of their effort. Cowley, whom I saw much of on the Nasiriya front, told me then that the Turks would shoot him if they caught him. The fact that he volunteered knowing this makes his action one which deserves to live in the annals of our race. In the words of Aubrey Herbert (p. 225) he was 'a proper Englishman'.

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[1] This opinion is not supported by Mousley.

[2] When Admiral Wemyss called for volunteers from the naval flotilla every man volunteered.

An attempt was made during the last fortnight of the siege to drop food into Kut by air, but we had neither the machines nor the skilled pilots necessary for success on a scale adequate to Townshend's needs: the maximum that could be dropped was about one ton a day: in all about 7 tons were dropped, from a height of from 5,000 to 7,000 feet. This did not go far amongst 19,000 people (3,000 British, 11,000 Indian, and 5,000 Arabs).

General Townshend in his book says that by this time the morale of his Indian troops was bad and that desertions were frequent: his somewhat querulous aspersions are not borne out by the accounts of his senior colleagues, General Melliss and General Delamain, whose relations with Indian troops during the siege were as close as those of General Townshend's were distant—he was very seldom seen by the rank and file—nor are they confirmed by Colonel Hehir of the Indian Medical Service. The *Official History* gives their views in detail; it is sufficient here to quote a contemporary note by the last-named officer, dated 18th April:

> 'There is a vast amount of suffering from hunger amongst the troops which is being borne with admirable patience and fortitude, and arouses enthusiastic praise at the pluck and grit displayed by both our British and Indian soldiers. Speaking as one who is amongst the men daily and has intimate knowledge of the conditions, the behaviour of the men in meeting these unfortunate conditions is heroic.'

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[1] *London Gazette*, 2nd Feb. 1917.

Photo by Russell

MAJ.-GEN. SIR C. J. MELLISS
V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
Indian Army

As for desertions, the few that occurred were mainly of frontier and trans-frontier tribesmen, certain of a welcome from their co-religionists and on the other hand conscious that the British Government could not secure, in the event of their death, the succession at home of their lawful heirs.

The end was drawing near: the gallant attempts of the British forces on the Tigris, involving as they did losses in killed and wounded equal in number to the whole garrison of Kut, proved fruitless. A final endeavour was then made to obtain terms for the garrison. On 23rd April, General Townshend suggested that General Lake, who had relieved General Nixon, should ask Khalil Pasha to permit the garrison to leave Kut in ships, on parole if need be, the town itself being surrendered. These, he said, were honourable terms, but it would cost money to get the Turks to agree: the latter, however, could not feed or pay the Kut force, or take them to Baghdad otherwise than on foot, in which case the men would die from weakness or at the hands of the company of Ishmael. General Lake replied suggesting that negotiations would have a better prospect of success if opened by Townshend himself. There was, however, no *quid pro quo* to be offered except possibly money; the Turks held all the cards. On the 26th after a further exchange of telegrams Townshend wrote to the Commandant of the Force blockading Kut and to Khalil Pasha to say that he was authorized to open negotiations. Khalil Pasha replied the same day politely but firmly demanding unconditional surrender, adding that General Townshend *and his soldiers* would be treated with all honour due to them for their heroic defence. A meeting between Townshend and Khalil followed, but Khalil did not modify his terms except to promise a reference to Enver Pasha. Townshend again suggested that General Lake and Khalil should meet: this, however, meant delay, for Lake was not near at hand. Townshend was offered the assistance of three officers in his negotiations, and was told to stipulate for a guarantee of immunity from Turkish vengeance for the civil population of Kut. The point did not, however, arise, though Captain Herbert did his best later on, as he narrates in his book (p. 234). In a further letter to Khalil Pasha, General Townshend asked that his force should be allowed to go free on parole; he in return would surrender his forty guns and pay, as authorized by the Cabinet, one million pounds sterling. It is not clear whether this vast sum was intended for the personal account of Khalil or Enver Pasha, or whether it was destined to assist the Turkish Government in the prosecution of the war. No such sum was available in specie in Mesopotamia, nor even in India, where the mints were working day and night coining bar silver into rupees. It may be presumed that His Majesty's Government would have opened credits in the United States of America for this sum in favour of the Turkish Government, which in turn would have authorized the German Government to draw on it for their needs. General Townshend was further authorized to effect an exchange of prisoners, Turk for British, Arab for Indian. Khalil, if German accounts are to be relied on, recommended to Enver Pasha that the garrison be allowed to leave on parole, but the reply was an emphatic negative: Townshend alone might leave on parole provided he handed over guns and military stores intact; for the rest—unconditional surrender. In a separate communication Enver Pasha added that Turkey did not want money, and reminded Khalil that 10,000 Turkish lives had been sacrificed at Kut.

On this being reported to London, the Cabinet promptly increased their offer to £2,000,000, displaying in so doing an anxiety to avoid the worst consequences of defeat which contrasted strangely with Mr. Asquith's reference less than three months before[1] to the campaign in Mesopotamia as an important but comparatively minor incident in the operations of the Allies against the Central Powers.

The late Captain Aubrey Herbert, M.P., who with Colonel W. H. Beach, head of the Intelligence Branch I.E.F. 'D', and Captain T. E. Lawrence took part in these negotiations, has left on record in his book (p. 226 et seq.) an incomplete account of the negotiations, which is fully set forth, without comment, in the *Official History*. Some comment is, however, called for. In the first place, the offer of money, in such circumstances, was not only unprecedented, but foredoomed to failure. Sir Percy Cox, who was consulted, was strongly opposed to making such a proposal, believing that it could have no effect on the issue, and the mere fact that we had made it would have the worst effect when known. He explicitly dissociated himself from the negotiations on such a basis, which were in consequence entrusted to others. The event justified his anticipations: though the fact that we had offered money in exchange for the release of the garrison was kept out of the British papers, it was blazoned by the Central Powers throughout the rest of the world, and formed the text of numberless cartoons and editorial articles. Enver Pasha's refusal of money was held up as a noble gesture; England's hour had struck: English gold could no longer prevail where English arms had failed. It was my lot in after years to read many such diatribes, or translations of them, with a sore heart. I have heard from many, including Persians, Arabs, and Turks, that this attempt to bribe Enver, as it was always described, owing to the extreme secrecy maintained on our side, did us immense harm. Moreover, it was surely bad policy, even in April 1916, to provide the enemy with cash and guns, in order to protect invalids, however gallant, against the fortune of war. Finally, it is abundantly clear that like much else at this time in Mesopotamia, the idea of offering cash on this immense scale was conceived at the last moment[1] and seized on without adequate consideration, as a last resource, by General Headquarters in Mesopotamia and the War Office under Lord Kitchener. The Government of India was ignored, and from the welter of official communications published on the subject the views of the Chief Political Officer did not emerge. Yet his previous training, his reputation, and the specific functions entrusted to him by Government marked him out as the person most likely to be able to judge and if need be handle such a matter rightly. The fate of the Arabs of Kut was a matter on which he should have been consulted and in which his long experience as a negotiator might have been of use.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 15.2.16.

On April 29th, after destroying his guns, much to the indignation of Khalil Pasha, General Townshend surrendered. His force was made up as follows:

British officers	277
Indian officers	204
British rank and file	2,592
Indian rank and file	6,988
Indian followers (non-combatant) . . .	3,248
	13,309

During the siege 1,025 had been killed or had died of wounds, 721 had died of disease, 2,500 had been wounded, and 72 were missing, nearly all men of the 67th Punjabis who were killed or captured on the 9th December at the bridge-head.

Of the wounded, 1,450 were in hospital, and of these some of the worst cases, numbering 1,130, were exchanged and sent down river, followed some months later by 345 more from Baghdad. About 12,000 men in all went into captivity, of whom more than 4,000 died, the great majority in circumstances, which will be described in a later chapter, of shameful cruelty or horrible neglect. Of the British rank and file nearly 70 per cent. left their bones in Turkey.

The occupation of Kut by the Turks was accompanied by scenes[2] of indiscipline, violence, and savage brutality. Officers of the highest rank and men, sick and wounded, were pillaged by Turkish soldiers and Arabs under the eyes of their officers, their boots and blankets stolen, and their food seized, any resistance being met by merciless bludgeonings. Leading Arabs who had been denounced to the Turks were horribly tortured, and strangled, as also were the interpreters attached to the Force, including one Sassoon, who was hanged with his legs broken, for he had been so tortured that he jumped off the roof to kill himself.

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[1] By General Townshend (vide *O.H.* ii, 450).

[2] Keeling (p. 3) states that such occurrences were exceptional.

The Turkish doctors pronounced men fit to march into captivity without reference to their condition. Several who had been classified as fit for the journey to Baghdad died at Kut before they could be removed. Men with legs in splints, smashed thighs, and spinal injuries were sent to Baghdad, to die in agony on the way.

Easter fell on 23rd April, a week before the surrender of the town. How many of those who thronged the churches in England in Holy Week realized the import of the Morning Lesson for the Wednesday before Easter to their fellows in the doomed garrison?—

> 'They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger:[1] for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.
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> * * * * * * *
>
> 'The Kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> 'As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.'
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> 'They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.' (*The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, iv.)

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[1] This dictum has been adopted by the British Treasury, which grants a larger pension to the widows of officers killed in action than to the widows of those who die of sickness or as prisoners (see Debates H.C. 14. 8. 16).

CHAPTER VIII[1]

A VISIT TO INDIA, AND THE ATTEMPTS TO RELIEVE KUT

'Is all our travail turn'd to this effect?
After the slaughter of so many peers,
So many captains, gentlemen, and soldiers,
That in this quarrel have been overthrown,
And sold their bodies for their country's benefit,
Shall we at last conclude effeminate peace?'
Henry VI, Part I, Act v, scene iv.

The Basra Club. Beri-Beri. Medical Board at Bombay. Delhi. Reinforcements reach Basra. General Aylmer takes command. Battles of Shaikh Sa'ad and Wadi. Further attacks. Weather defeats us. Developments at the Base. War Office takes control. Sir Percy Lake succeeds Sir John Nixon. Dujaila. General Gorringe succeeds Sir Fenton Aylmer. Fresh assaults fail. Final efforts. Sannaiyat. The Julnar. Attempts to relieve Kut abandoned.

FOR two months after I left Nasiriya the Political Office at Basra claimed every moment of my waking hours except one spent daily at 'The Club' on the road at the back of the premises of Messrs. Gray, Mackenzie & Co. This pleasant little pot-house was originally started by the British residents at Basra in pre-war days as a social club, and on the outbreak of war they generously made all officers of the Expeditionary Force honorary members: drinks were not sold across the bar, they were signed for, on the bad old 'chit' system, and a bill supported by innumerable vouchers sent in monthly. Though the Club sold, on this system, an immense quantity of liquor, for it was the only place where an officer could respectably drink outside his own squalid mess-tent, it eventually got into financial difficulties, for its honorary members numbered most of the several thousand officers who passed through the port on their way up-stream. Many were killed, more were wounded or captured, or transferred to other theatres of war, and the collection of outstanding vouchers proved most difficult and large sums had eventually to be written off as irrecoverable. In 1916 the chit system was abolished, and a cash system substituted. Those in authority had by this time quite forgotten the origin of the Club, and I was solemnly told by a high officer at General Head-quarters early in 1916 that it was proposed to prohibit civilians from using the Club, lest they should hear official secrets from the lips of garrulous officers!

In October I had a very bad attack of malaria, followed by a form of *beri-beri*: my teeth became loose in my gums, and slow paralysis attacked my hands and feet. I could only walk with a stick, on my heels, and finally could only write with difficulty. I knew enough of the state of the hospitals even at that time to refuse to become an inmate. My friend Dr. Forbes Borrie treated me effectively for malaria by intravenous injections of quinine, and for the rest advised a trip to India. Mr. (later Sir Robert) Holland of the Indian Civil Service, who had seen service in the Persian Gulf as Political Agent at Masqat, relieved me and I went off on a returning transport to India, scarcely able to walk. I found some beer on board—not the Japanese variety but the real thing, brewed in India. I developed a liking for it that rapidly grew on me. I craved for it and indulged my taste very freely. It seemed to be all that I needed; I felt it to be meat as well as drink. Never before had I felt thus about alcohol, and I thought at first that I had set my feet on a slippery path, but I knew that I had *beri-beri*, and that many of my friends thought that they had seen the last of me at Basra; I felt it was a case of kill or cure. My condition rapidly improved, and after the event doctors ascribed my craving to vitamin deficiency which was met by the yeast in the beer. In the Statistical Report on the health of the Royal Navy in 1927 will be found a statement by the medical officer of H.M.S. *Lupin* that only teetotallers succumbed to an outbreak of *beri-beri* in the Persian Gulf during that year. The First Lord of the Admiralty explained in Parliament[1] that 'it was not legitimate to draw any far-reaching conclusion' from this circumstance, but my experience twelve years earlier suggests otherwise.

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, Bird, Candler, Younghusband.

On arrival at Bombay I appeared before an overworked Medical Board. As I entered the room one member of the Board commenced to chant in a sing-song voice: 'The Board having carefully examined'—(aside) *what is wrong with you?*—and recommend that he be allowed to proceed—(aside) *where do you want to go to?*' 'Colombo', said I, wishing to try fresh woods and pastures new. '*You can't go to Colombo, outside British India—where else do you want to go to?*' said the voice, all in a breath. 'Peshawar', I replied. '*Peshawar*', echoed the voice, 'for a period of—(aside) *how much leave do you want?*'. 'One month,' said I. '*One month*,' said the voice. With businesslike dispatch a staff clerk handed me a copy of the completed proceedings, and a few minutes later I had my railway warrant for Peshawar. On the way malaria came on again and I felt I could go no farther, so I struggled out of the carriage with my bedding at Delhi at midnight, and with the aid of the station sweeper spread my bed on the ground in a corner of the waiting-room, and lay there till late next day when, the fever having left me, I staggered into a carriage which took me to Maiden's Hotel. I was offered a bedroom upstairs, but was too weak to climb the steps, and after an unsuccessful effort to do so asked for and obtained a bed on the ground floor. A day or two later I met at breakfast Major R. Markham Carter of the Indian Medical Service, in medical charge of the hospital ship *Varela*; a chance remark of mine led to an exchange of views between us on the state of the hospital services in Mesopotamia. He told me that he had left nothing undone to bring the true state of affairs before higher authority, but that he had been treated with great rudeness by Surgeon-General Hathaway, and threatened by the D.A. and Q.M.G. with arrest and dismissal from his ship 'as a meddlesome interfering faddist' (*R.C.*, p. 81). He asked me, as an independent person, to support him, if need be, so far as I could do so, in any further action he might feel bound to take, even at the risk of his commission; this I readily agreed to do. The breakdown of medical and transport services is dealt with more fully in Chapter XI, but this is perhaps the place to quote the Commissioners' verdict on Major Carter:

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[1] H.C. 6.11.29.

> 'He by his persistence brought to the notice of his superiors the terrible conditions of the wounded when they arrived at Basra after Ctesiphon, and in other ways he revealed shortcomings which might have been ignored and left unremedied. His sense of duty seems to be most commendable, and he was fertile and resourceful in suggesting remedies.'

During my stay at Delhi I saw Sir Hamilton Grant, the Foreign Secretary, and was by him sent to see General Kirkpatrick, the C.G.S., who sent me on to the Quartermaster-General in India. My interview with the latter would have been laughable but for the tragic issues involved. 'I hear you are back from Mesopotamia', he began. 'I suppose you are full of grouses like every one else there.' I mentioned that we were very short of vegetables—the lack of which for six months or so had given rise to much scurvy and *beri-beri*. 'That's what they all say', he replied, adding with almost venomous emphasis: 'What I always say is—if you want vegetables—GROW 'EM.' I protested that this policy had its seasonal limitations, but he would not hear me, and bowed me out.

I heard in official circles of the idea that Mesopotamia might become partially Indianized by the planting there of military colonies such as exist in the Punjab: it was even suggested that Mesopotamia, or at any rate Basra, should become a dependency of India. Lord Crewe referred specifically to these views in a Parliamentary debate (H.L. 25.6.20), and they found expression in the House of Commons as early as 21st July 1915 in a speech by Colonel C. E. Yate, who remarked, amid cheers, that 'India alone could carry out the great schemes of irrigation planned by Sir W. Willcocks'.[1] At a still earlier date Lord Curzon, speaking in the House of Lords on 6th January 1915, remarked that he looked forward with anticipation to a happy future for Mesopotamia. 'This country once waved with corn and was occupied by a large and prosperous population, but it is now a desert. . . . I hope that under the new conditions it may recover its prosperity and that the desert may again blossom as the rose.' My very junior position in the official hierarchy precluded me from doing much to disillusion those who harboured such hopes: my emphatic expressions of dissent failed to convince: I was regarded as pro-Arab, likewise pro-Persian, whereas in the Secretariat, in the nature of things, it is not good to be pro-anything.

Delhi, despite much hospitality and some very pleasant society, had no attractions for me, and I returned to duty, after obtaining a medical certificate with as little difficulty and of as much value as that at Bombay. A passage was allotted to me at Karachi on an overcrowded transport: the Embarkation Staff, seeing me described on their list as of the Political Department, noted 'non-combatant' in the margin and told me I would have to take my luck on deck, as the cabins were wanted for combatant officers. It was too good a joke to be spoiled by a protest, so I found a space for my bedding between the davits under a ship's boat, reflecting that I should probably suffer less from the cold than the lately commissioned subalterns who occupied the cabins: they, anyway, would have much to face later on, whilst I at Basra was sure of a roof over my head The voyage was notable chiefly for the crop of appalling rumours we took on board at Karachi, which arose, as I presently discovered, from a confusion between Kut-al-Amara and ʿAmara.

I returned to my post to find Sir Percy Cox still up-stream and Holland seriously ill with enteric fever, so I regretfully resumed the duties of Deputy Chief Political Officer, instead of rejoining General Gorringe, who had asked for me again. It was perhaps just as well, for I was still weak and my heart was giving trouble, but I should have liked to go back to the 12th Division, where I had many friends.

From that time onwards routine work, constant and unceasing, but of immense variety and absorbing interest, occupied me. The Force (and with it the scope of the Civil Administration) was now growing rapidly in numbers; new problems were arising and old problems had to be examined afresh and some sort of uniform system applied to their solution. Some account of the development of the Civil Administration during 1916 will be found in Chapter X, but before dealing with these matters reference must be made to military developments on the

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[1] See also *The Round Table*, June 1917.

Tigris during the winter and spring of this year, having for their sole object the relief of Kut.

As mentioned in Chapter VI, his Majesty's Government, in sanctioning the advance on Baghdad, had promised that reinforcements would be sent from France, India, and Egypt to Mesopotamia and should arrive early in December: so serious, however, had the position become in the meanwhile that two Brigades of Indian Infantry and three Field Batteries, with other troops, were sent from India and pushed up the Tigris as fast as the scanty transport available would allow. Some regiments went by land, along a raised roadway which had for some months been under construction, partly by Indian Labour Corps and partly by Arab labour (then in process of organization into a 'Corps' under selected officers). The burden of recruiting this labour, and keeping it at work in all weathers, fell largely on the local political officers, who by this time had learned enough of their districts to be able to demand from each village and tribe its fair quota.

General Sir Fenton Aylmer, who had vacated the post of Adjutant-General in India to take command of the Tigris Corps of two divisions and other troops, totalling some 19,000 fighting men and 46 guns, was under no illusions as to the difficulty of the task confronting him, viz. to relieve Kut forthwith. He pointed out the disadvantages inherent in a hurried advance and asked General Townshend to give full weight thereto before fixing a definite date by which it was essential that Kut should be relieved. The first forward move was made by the 7th Division under General Younghusband. The Turkish force at the beginning of January 1916, estimated at a maximum of about 30,000 men and 83 guns, had tactically the advantage. The space between the Tigris and the marsh which extended for many miles on the left bank was not more than a mile; on the right bank the ground was broken and offered every facility for delaying tactics. The Turks were at home, and on the defensive, whilst many of our troops had come from very different conditions in France, where they had already suffered heavily, and from Egypt. The weather throughout was unusually bad, and favoured the Turks; the 'loose-wallahs', as the troops called the predatory Arabs, were busy on both banks robbing *mahailas* conveying military stores, and giving nightly displays of their marvellous skill as thieves.

The problem facing General Nixon as Commander-in-Chief and General Aylmer as Corps Commander was thus one of extreme difficulty: they were burdened with immense responsibilities and with the need for a whole series of makeshifts and improvisations with the scanty material and personnel at their disposal. They were particularly deficient in information as to the ground over which they would have to fight, and as to the dispositions of the enemy; of the true state of General Townshend's supplies they were completely ignorant.

On 7th January was fought the battle of Shaikh Saʿad, distant 25–30 miles from Kut. The bulk of our forces were disposed on the left bank, whilst the Cavalry Brigade with a few guns and infantry support operated on the right bank: fighting was continuous for forty-eight hours. Strong wind and heavy rain on the night of the 8th/9th added to the confusion, and the men became exhausted from marching and countermarching through clinging mud. Our troops on both banks found themselves faced by trenches of whose existence they were not aware, and on the left bank the troops were outflanked instead of outflanking. Of the 18,500 or 19,000 fighting men on the British side, 4,000 became casualties, a most serious loss, whilst lack of medical personnel and equipment and of river transport involved intense hardship to the wounded, and grave difficulties in transporting them to the rear. The 92nd Punjabis and the 6th Jats in particular suffered very heavy casualties, as also the Leicesters. The casualties of the Turks, who were on the defensive, and in greater strength than ourselves, were estimated, probably incorrectly, at about the same figure.

In the event, the Turks retired from Shaikh Saʿad to Hanna and the narrow strip of dry land between the Tigris and the Suwaikiya marsh at Sannaiyat. They had fought more stubbornly than in any battle up to Ctesiphon, and had certainly not been defeated; it seems likely therefore that their retirement was due less to the pressure exerted on them by General Aylmer's troops than to the need to shorten their communications.

There is little doubt that had General Nixon and General Aylmer realized that Townshend was in no urgent need of relief, they would have decided to delay the advance, and endeavour, even by a retirement, to induce the Turks to meet them on more favourable ground. There was, however, another factor to be considered, to which at the moment we had good reason to attach importance. The Russians had sent a force of some 15,000 men, with 46 guns, from the Caucasus into Persia with the specific object of co-operating with us against the Turks, and were advancing in several columns on Kirmanshah and on other places. It seemed possible that this movement might lead to a considerable diversion of Turkish troops. We were in wireless touch with the Russians through Qazvin and there seemed some prospect that effective co-operation might be possible in the near future. On the other hand, climatic conditions were unfavourable to a rapid advance by the Russians, and equally to any advance by us after the end of March: the rising waters of the Tigris would cut the embanked roads along the river and still further reduce the area within which our troops could deploy for action on either bank.

After weighing these and other factors, General Aylmer telegraphed on 11th January to Sir John Nixon that he had determined to continue the advance on Kut, 'but it is my distinct duty to point out that it is a most precarious undertaking, for which, of course, I accept full responsibility, as I consider that the situation demands a supreme effort to relieve Townshend. . . . My medical establishments . . . are deplorably low . . . and the wounded cannot receive proper attention . . . I have only one aeroplane in action. . . . On the other hand I have the greatest confidence that the troops will do what is humanly possible. . .' General Nixon was more sanguine and he telegraphed at once in reply: 'I must leave matter to your decision. Am confident you and the fine troops under your command will achieve your object.'

On 13th January commenced the battle of the Wadi—so called from the fact that it was fought in the vicinity of the bed of the Changula, which near its confluence with the Tigris is known as the Wadi, or ravine. On the right or further bank of the Wadi were entrenched the Turks, numbering about 11,000: behind them, three and a half miles away, was the long and narrow Hanna defile between river and marsh. Dawn broke through thick mist, and it was not till half-past seven that the fight began. Two hours later our troops reached the Wadi and crossed it with little opposition. Much delay, however, occurred in getting the artillery across the Wadi, and the Infantry attack lacked in consequence the element of surprise. There was some sharp fighting,[1] and steady progress was made till night fell, when the troops halted in their muddy tracks and dug themselves in to the music of an unremitting bombardment by the Turks. The attack was resumed next day (14th January): mirage made adequate artillery support, whether military or naval, very difficult, and though further progress was made our casualties were heavy and the supply of ammunition and food caused anxiety; a cold wind and clouds of dust added to the discomfort of the troops and seriously delayed our shipping. There was no firing that night, but heavy rain fell and few of the British or Indian troops had anything to eat. General Aylmer decided that in these circumstances a further advance was impracticable: he had lost

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[1] The Victoria Cross was awarded to Sepoy Chatta Singh of the 9th Bhopals 'for most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in leaving cover to assist his Commanding Officer who was lying wounded and helpless in the open. Sepoy Chatta Singh bound up the officer's wound and then dug cover for him with his entrenching tool, being exposed all the time to very heavy rifle fire. 'For five hours until nightfall he remained beside the wounded officer, shielding him with his own body on the exposed side. He then, under cover of darkness, went back for assistance, and brought the officer into safety.'—*London Gazette*, 21st June, 1916.

1,600 men, of whom over 200 were killed, and was no nearer the fulfilment of his task. According to the accounts of prisoners, the Turks too had suffered, and General Aylmer estimated their losses at 2,000, but they had successfully withdrawn to the Hanna position during the night of the 13th/14th and had by a lucky shell so disabled one of the naval flotilla, H.M.S. *Gadfly*, that it was sent to Abadan for repair forthwith. The weather, too, had again helped them: the mud, deep, clinging and universal, constituted a far greater obstacle to the attackers than to the defence. The wind had prevented the bridging of the Tigris at the Wadi and the arrival of supplies by river. The stars in their courses were fighting against us.

Throughout the 15th January and during the following night the evacuation of wounded continued. Aylmer now had only 9,000 fighting men at his disposal: in the space of a week he had lost six thousand. General Townshend sent him during the day a querulous telegram.

> 'We are now at the 15th January, that is to say, the date which you laid down in December as being hazardous to hold out beyond. I only shut myself up at Kut on the distinct understanding that I was relieved in a month, and we have now been six weeks.'

Other circumstances, too, combined to force General Aylmer's hand. The latest news indicated that Townshend's food supplies would not last beyond 7th February; we had evacuated Gallipoli on 7th January, thus releasing large bodies of Turks, whom we knew to be on the way to Baghdad; no substantial assistance could be hoped for from the Russian forces in Persia, and the longer we allowed the Turks to remain where they were the more elaborate would be their trenches. The higher, too, would rise the water in the marshes, making even narrower the Hanna defile.

To make a decision was difficult. Neither Sir John Nixon, Sir Fenton Aylmer, nor General Townshend was in the best state of mind to do so. Sir John Nixon was in bad health and Sir Percy Lake was actually on his way out to relieve him: he had taken a great responsibility in deciding to hold Kut, and was naturally loath to accept General Aylmer's estimate of the difficulties that confronted the Tigris Corps. Had he realized how greatly the odds were in favour of the Turks, and how grievously General Aylmer was hampered by the weather and the floods; had he been aware that there was no such urgency as would justify his staking all on a final attempt, he would doubtless have refrained from insisting on an immediate action, or would have left the decision to his successor, Sir Percy Lake, who arrived on the following day (18th January). But Sir John did not possess this knowledge, and his staff appear to have done little to obtain it on his behalf by personal contact with the G.O.C. Tigris Corps: he had, as is usual in war, to act on deductions from inaccurate premisses. General Townshend, on the other hand, 'was giving too little and asking too much.' General Aylmer, harassed by difficulties of material, personnel, climate, and organization, was, perhaps, unduly pessimistic. He telegraphed at length on January 17th to General Nixon, pointing out the difficulties confronting him, and making proposals for joint action with Townshend, which were somewhat abruptly negatived:

> 'I cannot believe that the position in front of you can equal in strength those attacked and captured by us in the past, which had been under preparation for four months. The course you now propose . . . would be disastrous . . . and I cannot sanction it.'

Almost simultaneously with this telegram from Basra, General Aylmer received (without any apologies) from General Townshend the news that he had rations for another three weeks in Kut, whilst from his Chief of Staff came the news that the bridge, on which he relied for liberty of manœuvre, had again been broken.

With the approval of Sir John Nixon, General Aylmer decided on a frontal attack by the 7th Division on the main Turkish position at Hanna, which was to be bombarded from both banks and from the naval flotilla for twenty-four hours previously, both with H.E. and shrapnel. It was intended to begin on the 19th, but the weather conditions were so appalling that action was postponed until 21st January. The battle would be won, if at all, by hard hitting on a narrow front, and that our losses would be severe was realized by General Aylmer, who in a telegram on the eve of the battle wrote:

> 'It may be assumed definitely that the Sixth Division (holding Kut al Amara) will not be the only weak one when we arrive—though the enemy will doubtless lose seriously.'

Of his 9,000 men he had only 4,000 in the trenches; the rest were absorbed, inevitably, in ancillary duties. The attack was led by the Black Watch and 41st Dogras, followed by the 6th Jats and 97th Infantry and 37th Dogras. All the British officers of the 41st were killed or wounded, and the 37th were little better off: only twenty-five men reached the wire, which had not been cut by the artillery barrage so effectively as opposite the Black Watch. The 19th Brigade made little headway and suffered heavy losses; the 9th Brigade was equally unfortunate. The wind prevented the men from moving faster than a slow walk. All the officers of the 62nd were killed or wounded, the 1/4th Hampshires fared no better, and were brought to a stop; the

Connaught Rangers could find no cover, for all the trenches were full of dead and wounded, and they themselves suffered heavily.

Our casualties had been very heavy,[1] but General Younghusband decided to renew the attack, after a further bombardment, at two o'clock the same day. Heavy rain came on, our signalling arrangements broke down, and his instructions failed to reach many parts of the line; the attempt, when made, was met by crushing fire, and was abandoned. So heavy was the ground that reinforcements could only drag themselves forward at a slow walk. Hundreds dropped in their tracks, many were suffocated by the mud in and out of the trenches. General Younghusband felt that the physical condition of his troops made it impossible to attack with hope of success till the weather cleared, and a withdrawal took place to entrenchments 1,300 yards from the Turks. General Aylmer, however, decided to make a last attempt; but communication, always difficult, had become impossible, and to pass on specific orders was out of the question. The rain put an end to the battle: all ranks spent the night standing or lying in the icy water, under ceaseless torrents of driving rain, varied by sleet, yet by daylight the 7th Division had to some extent been reorganized, and those of the wounded who had not perished of cold had been taken to the rear. Our casualties were about 2,700.

The Tigris had been rising steadily, the Wadi was in spate, and by the evening of the 21st the battle area was a great mud flat, across which a man on foot could not make more than one mile an hour. Early on the 22nd, on General Aylmer's initiative, a flag of truce was sent to the enemy to ask for a cessation of hostilities for the purpose of collecting the wounded and burying the dead; scarcely had the flag been hoisted in our trenches when Arabs swarmed out of the Turkish lines, and began to rob wounded and dead alike and in some cases to stab and to cut the throats of wounded men, whenever they could do so unobserved. Officers and men, unarmed because of the flag of truce, went to the rescue of their comrades only to be assaulted and robbed by Arabs, who prowled around, tireless in their foul lust for property or human life.

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[1] It was in the course of this action that the V.C. was won by Captain J. A. Sinton, I.M.S. 'For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. Although shot through both arms and through the side, he refused to go to the hospital, and remained as long as daylight lasted attending to his duties under very heavy fire. In three previous actions Captain Sinton displayed the utmost bravery.'—*London Gazette*, 21st June, 1916. The same decoration was awarded to 501 Lance-Naik Lala of the 41st Dogras. 'For most conspicuous bravery. Finding a British officer of another regiment lying close to the enemy, he dragged him into a temporary shelter, which he himself had made, and in which he had already bandaged four wounded men. After bandaging his wounds he heard calls from the Adjutant of his own regiment who was lying in the open severely wounded. The enemy were not more than one hundred yards distant, and it seemed certain death to go out in that direction, but Lance-Naik Lala insisted on going out to his Adjutant and offered to crawl back with him on his back at once. When this was not permitted, he stripped off his own clothing to keep the wounded officer warmer, and stayed with him till just before dark, when he returned to the shelter. After dark he carried the first wounded officer back to the main trenches, and then, returning with a stretcher, carried back his Adjutant. He set a magnificent example of courage and devotion to his officers.'—*London Gazette*, 13th May, 1916. See also Younghusband, p. 293.

The third attempt within three weeks had failed; we had lost 8,000 men killed and wounded, of whom a few were taken prisoners during the truce: the flower of the Indian Army was buried on the banks of the Tigris from Shuʿaiba to Ctesiphon, together with thousands of their British comrades in arms. Public opinion in India and at home had been profoundly moved: the search for a scapegoat had not as yet begun, though the rumours that became current in England and India of the defective nature of medical arrangements in Mesopotamia had induced the India Office, during January, to direct the Commander-in-Chief in India to appoint a commission of investigation, to which reference is made in Chapter XI. Every consideration, both local and imperial, demanded that a further attempt be made to retrieve the position; and the new Army Commander, Sir Percy Lake, who as Chief of the General Staff in India had shared with General Nixon responsibility for the tragic sequence of events in Mesopotamia, applied himself, in communication with Sir Fenton Aylmer, to discharge the task now laid on his shoulders.

Though he had failed in what he had undertaken, General Nixon retained the esteem and the confidence of the rank and file of the Expeditionary Force, and especially of the Indian units which formed nine-tenths of its total strength. He spoke Hindustani with unusual fluency, and could speak to units and to the Indian officers in several tongues 'understanded of the people'. Under his leadership the force had achieved an unbroken series of successes so notable as to cause an English daily paper to refer to 'the Mesopotamia pic-nic': the men were, as usual, the last to condemn him. Many felt that, like Sir Arthur Barrett, he had been slow to recognize the shortcomings of his staff, and too lenient to individuals whose incompetence was proved. Some who had been able to follow the trend of his correspondence with Simla considered that he should have realized from the first the inability of the Government of India to provide transport and ancillary services indispensable for successful operations beyond ʿAmara, and that he should have intimated plainly to his superiors that unless all his demands were met in full he could wisely make no further advance. My own view is that the operations in ʿArabistan and on the Euphrates were both unnecessary; that the capture of ʿAmara would have automatically entailed a Turkish withdrawal from Ahwaz, and that the Turkish force at Nasiriya could not have seriously threatened our base at Basra or our lines of communication, both being easily defensible. Sir John Nixon was, however, hampered from the first by his instructions, in which political and strategical aims were inextricably mixed. A loyal servant of Government, he knew that the capture of Baghdad was ardently desired by the Cabinet; he took great risks, as great commanders have always done, to attain the desired end: he risked his reputation, and lost it. His further employment was impossible in face of the censure of the Mesopotamia Commission and would have been prevented in any case by his bad health. He died in December 1921.

The selection of Sir Percy Lake[1] as General Nixon's sucessor was in all the circumstances unfortunate. As Chief of the General Staff, India, he had been officially responsible, under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India, for the dispatch of Sir John Nixon to relieve Sir Arthur Barrett, and for every decision of importance in regard to the size and equipment of the Force since that date. He was rightly regarded as having been constitutionally responsible for some at least of its deficiencies, and for past errors of strategy. Every General Officer in the Force and most of the senior staff officers were personally known to him and had been appointed on his recommendation to their present positions.

The G.O.C. Tigris Corps, Sir Fenton Aylmer, had been, until a few months previously, Adjutant-General in India, a trusted colleague of Sir Percy Lake in the administration of the Army in India. The health of the Commander-in-Chief in India was not so robust, nor the organization of Army Head-quarters so perfect, that either could lose, without detriment to efficiency, the heads of two of the three most important branches of the administration: the remaining office, that of the Quartermaster-General, was notoriously in weak hands. The selection of Lake and Aylmer for high command in Mesopotamia was in part due to reasons of a personal and by no means unworthy nature: the highest rewards in military service are by tradition reserved for those who have attained distinction in the field: administrative services, not less arduous, scarcely less responsible, and far less well remunerated, never received due recognition until the Great War was drawing to its close.

Sir Percy Lake therefore came to Mesopotamia handicapped by the very fact that he had been in close touch throughout with the Government of India, whose outlook and limitations he shared, for neither he nor any other responsible officer of Army Head-quarters had visited Mesopotamia during the campaign. He did not bring fresh staff officers with him: he took over those of his predecessor, whose illness had precluded him for some time from exercising personal supervision over their deliberations and decisions. It is to Sir Percy's credit that he contrived, during these fateful months, to do so much to remedy the mistakes of the past and to make provision for the future. He quickly realized how completely Army Head-quarters in India had underestimated the great natural difficulties of the country and how inadequate was the equipment of the Force. Reinforcements were now arriving far faster than they could be sent up stream (there were at Basra more troops on 21st January than at the front). Congestion at the Base was such that supply ships were lying at anchor in mid-stream for a month or more before they could be unloaded: additional stevedores were unobtainable and labour for the preparation of camps and roads at the Base exceedingly scarce. Sir Percy Lake lost no time in directing into useful channels all available labour and in giving greater scope for individual initiative to experts who had already been sent from India to assist in extricating the port from the chaos which brooded over it. Sir George Buchanan, a distinguished but pugnacious engineer with many years' experience in the port of Rangoon, had been in Basra for three weeks with the title of Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy, but had been prevented by the most backward branch of the administration, that of the Quartermaster-General, from doing more than carry out surveys. General Lake gave Sir G. Buchanan larger powers and authorized an extensive system of dredging (see p. 201), but did not realize that complete reorganization and a far larger staff were necessary for the efficient working of the port. He also investigated the possibility of making a railway up the Tigris, and urged the Government of India, meanwhile, to send some light railway material for local purposes. He was less successful in his preliminary inspection of hospital arrangements: he was misled by the indomitable cheerfulness of the patients he saw and 'did not gather, as he afterwards ascertained to have been the case, that they had been badly cared for up-river.'[1] He was enlightened on the true facts before

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[1] Younghusband states (p. 286) that the appointment was originally intended to be temporary, pending the arrival of a nominee of the War Office.

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[1] *O.H.* ii, 281. The attitude of the rank and file towards Inspecting Officers was not unlike that of their grandfathers in the Crimean War, as exemplified by the following extract from Kinglake, vol. vi:

'Lord Raglan, when visiting the field-hospitals, used to ask upon entering each tent whether any of the men there collected had any complaints to make. No man ever used to say: "My Lord, you see how I am lying wet and cold, with only this one blanket to serve me for bed and covering. The doctors are wonderfully kind, but they have not the medicines, nor the wine, nor any of the comforting things they would like to be giving me. If only I had another blanket, I think perhaps I might live." Such words would have been long. Sir Percy Lake might with advantage have devoted a month to the examination of such problems, and of many others to which no allusion can be made here, but the situation on the Tigris compelled him to hasten up stream to meet General Aylmer: he left Basra on 24th January and arrived at the head-quarters of the Tigris Corps on the 28th. While he was on his way, General Townshend announced that he had not 22 but 84 days' food in hand and could hold out till 17th April—having discovered large supplies of grain in native hands.

A week later, on 3rd February, Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, presented to the War Committee of the Cabinet a paper (*O.H.* ii. App. xviii), in which he recommended that the control of the operations in Mesopotamia should in future be vested in the War Office, in exactly the same manner as in other theatres of war. This proposal, set forth with masterly lucidity and brevity, was immediately accepted both by the War Committee and by the Government of India. The decision marked an epoch in the history of the campaign in Mesopotamia and was welcomed with relief and gratitude by all. Henceforth we could draw upon the resources of the British Empire for the prosecution of the campaign, so far as the supreme authorities, in their wisdom, thought fit: British, not Indian, rulings and methods would be applied:[1] British, and not Indian, War Establishments would be aimed at, even if they could not be reached.[2]

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true to the letter, and also, I imagine, appropriate in the judgment of almost any civilian; but the soldier was not the man who would deign to utter them. He would hold the State fast to its bargain in respect to those pence that were promised him through the lips of the recruiting sergeant but on the other hand, he seemed to acknowledge that he had committed his bodily welfare no less than his life to the chances of war, and would let the Queen have what he sold her without a grudging word. Sometimes the brave men—I speak now of the men under arms—would do more than acquiesce in their sufferings, and—detecting perhaps a shadow of care in the face of their honoured chief when he rode past their camp—would seize any occasion that offered for showing him that they were content. Thus, for instance, when asked by Lord Raglan, whether his regiment had obtained its warm clothing, a soldier would not merely say "yes", but gratefully and cheerily add that that "was all they wanted".'

[1] One of the many disadvantages under which all ranks laboured in Mesopotamia was that six months were wont to elapse between the submission to the War Office of recommendations for promotions and rewards and the publication of the approved lists in the *London Gazette*. Such promotions became effective from date of publication, with most inequitable results. Officers of the same services promoted for service in France and Gallipoli gained both financially and in seniority, as also, in many cases, their widows. (Debates, H.C. 14.3.16.)

[2] Maj.-Gen. Gillman, who was afterwards Chief of the General Staff to Sir William Marshall, made a brief tour of Mesopotamia in March 1916 on behalf of the War Office. He was the first of a series of military liaison officers whose visits did much to facilitate the change-over.

Photo by Central Press

LIEUT. H. O. B. FIRMAN
V.C., R.N.
Killed in action, 25th April 1916

Henceforth the 'Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force' took the place of I.E.F. 'D' of glorious memory.[1]

Meanwhile, Sir Percy Lake had to face the urgencies of the situation on the Tigris; he appointed General Gorringe as Chief of the Staff of the Tigris Corps, his place being taken by General Brooking, who was later to achieve deserved fame at Ramadi and elsewhere. We had only one aeroplane available for use on the Tigris, while the Turks had half a dozen or more machines, generally faster and better than ours: we were still short of transport, and could not at the moment put into the fighting line the troops already in the country, still less those due to arrive, but thanks to General Townshend's discoveries of grain, it was now possible to defer a forward move for some months.

Sir George Gorringe had been with Kitchener in the Sudan, and had been one of the most successful of column commanders in the S. African War; but his known energy and driving power availed him little at this juncture. Ill-fortune pursued him, but no man could have battled more courageously than he did against adverse circumstances. A further battle was fought on 23rd/24th February in the course of which General Gorringe was wounded while carrying out a personal reconnaissance; some valauble information about enemy dispositions was obtained, but no considerable advance proved possible. Yet there was a chance, the potentialities of which do not seem to have been fully explored, of breaking the Turkish line. At this period the Turkish force on the left was far in advance of any body of troops on the right bank.

It was the belief of some members of the General Staff that the Turks had few, if any, troops between the force that was besieging Kut and the troops in the trenches facing the British forces. It was suggested to General Gorringe that he should throw a small force across the river during the night at the point where the marsh was nearest to the river and that this force, which would be very strong in machine guns, should make a trench facing both ways between river and marsh. It was supposed that the Turks facing us had only about three days' food and must therefore break back to Kut or surrender, and that if the besieging force came down to attack the trench the besieged, warned by us a few days beforehand, would sally out and attack them in the rear. Some of our artillery was to be moved up the right bank so as to command any Turkish force attacking the trench. No reference to this scheme appears in the *Official History*, nor in the dispatches; it was rejected by General Gorringe on grounds which doubtless appeared to him conclusive.

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[1] The biblical associations of the name had no doubt a certain publicity value in England, but its adoption as the official designation of the region hitherto known as 'Turkish Arabia' led to its being used, in the terms of the Armistice with Turkey, to denote the three wilayats of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul—an inaccuracy which had inconvenient consequences.

On 8th March a further determined effort was made to break the Turkish line and to relieve the garrison of Kut. This operation, 'the conduct of which', to quote the *Official History*, 'has probably given rise to more comment and criticism than any other action in the campaign', was commenced on 8th March, with the object of turning the right flank of the Turkish position on the right bank by the seizure of the Dujaila Redoubt. It began with a night march, which was imperfectly arranged, and not too well performed,[1] but was nevertheless astonishingly successful, for it took the Turks completely by surprise, and there were not more than 200 troops in and around Dujaila when our advance columns halted before the Redoubt. Major Gerald Leachman,[2] who had accompanied the column as Political Officer, actually entered the Redoubt with a few mounted Arabs, his personal retainers, and reported in person to General Kemball, to whom the task of seizing the Redoubt had been entrusted, that the garrison numbered in all some forty men. His party was fired at by our troops, but was unobserved by the Turks. It seemed evident to Colonel Walton, who commanded the leading battalion (26th Punjabis) that the Redoubt could and should be seized at once, and he continued to advance; his Brigadier, General Christian,[3] after personal examination of the position, approved, and so informed General Kemball. The latter, however, did not agree: he feared a trap, and wished to proceed 'according to plan', considering himself bound by the very explicit orders of General Aylmer,[4] which seem to have ignored the possibility that the Turks might be taken completely by surprise. He

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[1] For an important contribution to the study of this engagement see *Records of the Survey of India*, vol. xx, 1925, p. 11 et seq., which embodies a critical account of the march by Major K. Mason, R.E., who led the column. He does not believe that any delay in the march, or any inaccuracies of the map, contributed to the subsequent disaster.

[2] For some reference to the reputation he enjoyed amongst the troops see Tennant.

[3] He died in January 1930.

[4] On the vexed question of the duty of an officer to disobey orders in certain circumstances, the views of Lord Nelson, contained in a letter to Lord Spencer (6th November 1798), are reproduced from *The Naval Review*, vol. ii, p. 194 n.:

'Much as I approve of strict obedience to orders, . . . yet to say that an officer is never for any object to alter his orders is what I cannot comprehend. . . . The great order of all (implied by the commencement of the war) is to destroy the power of the French: to accomplish this in the quickest and easiest way is the object of all lesser orders, and if it can be proved that a breach of the lesser order is a more strict compliance with the former, then there can be no doubt of the duty of the breach of the lesser orders.'

Field Service Regulations on the subject are as follows:

A departure from either the spirit or the letter of an order is justified if the subordinate recalled the 26th Punjabis, and ordered artillery preparation to proceed, thus abandoning all the advantages of surprise. An hour and a half later General Christian implored permission to advance, but his request was refused, and it was not until three precious hours had been wasted that the ponderous military machine was allowed to function.

The advance began badly: the 36th Brigade seems to have moved across the the front of the 9th and 28th; its progress, like that of the other two Brigades, was disappointing and further movements on that day are confusing. Later on, at about 4.0 p.m., the 8th Indian Brigade almost succeeded in retrieving the blunders that had marked the inception of the attack. They had the sun in their eyes, and had to advance over three thousand yards of flat ground; in spite of terrific fire from the Turks, they stormed the Redoubt and actually seized the crest of the hill. They lost, however, half their number, and being unsupported were turned out by an immediate counter-attack of fresh Turkish troops.

The Cavalry are said, on high authority, to have exercised no influence on the battle. 'They hovered about in an ineffective way on the left, usually somewhat in rear of the infantry, and always moving either with great deliberation or not at all.' Had they been capably led, and had they either been used independently of General Kemball or under his orders, to operate against the enemy's reinforcements hurrying to Dujaila from the rear, they might have turned the scale in our favour: in point of fact, neither in this nor in any previous engagement on the Tigris were they permitted to play a part commensurate with the heavy drain that their employment entailed on the transport services The despised Arab, to quote a contemporary narrative, 'made rings round them every time'. The erroneous principle initiated at the battle of Sahil and adhered to in the first battle of Kut, and at Ctesiphon, was still maintained: instructions were issued by Corps Headquarters that wounded were to be collected and taken forward to the Dujaila Redoubt, a place occupied by the enemy, and no provision had been made in the event of the position not being captured.[1] The sufferings of the wounded were in consequence extreme, and lack of water added to their misery. Yet drinkable water there was, in plenty,

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who assumes the responsibility bases his decision on some fact which could not be known to the officer who issued the order, and if he is conscientiously satisfied that he is acting as his superior, if present, would order him to act.

If a subordinate, in the absence of a superior, neglects to depart from the letter of his orders, when such departure is clearly demanded by circumstances, and failure ensues, he will be held responsible for such failure.'

[1] *Official Medical History*, iv. 223.

a few feet below ground, and had any one had the enterprise to dig a few pits there would have been enough for all.

The force in Kut remained inactive during the day: General Townshend, by destroying his bridge in December, had made effective co-operation with a relieving force difficult, but the scales were held so evenly that a very little more weight on our side would have tipped them in our favour. If Townshend had transferred or had even attempted to transfer a proportion of his force to the right bank of the Tigris during the night of 7th March, he might have created a diversion which would have so relieved the pressure at Dujaila as to bring success within our grasp. He did not, however, intend to cross until he could see the troops of the relieving force advancing on the near side of the Dujaila; this would have meant a crossing by daylight, after the issue of the battle had for practical purposes been decided. No real co-operation was, however, in contemplation: General Townshend was not under General Aylmer's orders, and the relations between the two were, for reasons which will be clear to the attentive reader of the preceding chapters of this narrative, not of the best. Sir Percy Lake had inherited the staff of his predecessor and had scarcely had time to form an independent opinion upon the problems of strategy and organization that confronted his commanders on the Tigris. He may well have been hampered by the very intimacy of his personal relations with the principal commanders. All alike were certainly handicapped by the inadequacy of the available means of communication. By seven o'clock it was dark, and as the last attack had clearly failed General Aylmer decided to draw off, concentrate, and await events. Ammunition and water, which was very scarce, were brought up, and our wounded were taken under cover of darkness in springless carts some 15 miles back to Wadi. Their suffering can be imagined only by those who have endured similar hardship; but, as the *Official History* explains, 'it could not be helped, for at this period there were very few proper ambulance waggons in the country'. Arab marauders were busy on the battle-field, pillaging the dead, stripping and sometimes killing wounded men: the stretcher-bearers had to be accompanied by armed parties, whose attempts to drive away the Arabs frequently drew on them outbursts of rifle fire from the Turkish trenches, causing many casualties. When dawn broke the Arabs were still on the battle-field, cheerfully risking their lives in the all-absorbing pursuit of pillage. No object seemed too trifling for them: the blankets and clothes in which the dead had been buried, perhaps months before, were keenly sought for.

The force was exhausted by the long night march, followed by a second night spent in digging trenches. Another unsuccessful attack would have left them too exhausted to march back to Wadi: if on the other hand they gained the day, the available transport would not suffice to supply them with food and ammunition. (At this stage there was not a single motor-car available for military purposes in Mesopotamia.) It was doubtless with such considerations in view that General Aylmer decided early on the 9th to withdraw, and succeeded in doing so without serious loss, though the troops suffered greatly from thirst and exhaustion. Of 27,000 fighting men on both sides of the Tigris, over 500 were killed and about the same number missing, and over 2,500 were wounded; the casualties of the 8th, 9th, and 36th Brigade were upwards of 25 per cent. of their strength: the Manchesters and 2nd Rajputs left a third of their numbers on the field. The Turkish casualties amounted to about 1,300.

It is said that Napoleon was wont to inquire, before promoting an officer to high command, whether he was lucky. Concerning no Army, Corps, or Divisional Commander in Mesopotamia during the first months of 1916 could this question, if asked, have received other than a decided negative: General Aylmer in particular had experienced extraordinary difficulties not of his own making, for unlike General Nixon and General Townshend he recognized from the first the extreme difficulty of the task before him. His was the responsibility for selecting General Kemball to undertake operations against Dujaila and his were the very precise and detailed orders by which General Kemball felt himself bound. The force placed at this officer's disposal consisted of Brigades from three different formations, who had never worked together before, and whose commanders like his staff were strangers to General Kemball and to each other. Had the 3rd Division been used for the decisive attack, all these disadvantages would have been avoided, and the result would in all human probability have been different. The whole course of the campaign would have been altered and the subsequent history of the Middle East, and perhaps of the Great War, profoundly modified. India would have been spared some of the great sacrifices forced upon her by the employment in this theatre of war of a force whose eventual ration strength was nearly half a million; and some, at least, of the undesirable political consequences of this drain on her man-power and resources would have been avoided.

In the circumstances it was inevitable that General Aylmer, his fine and gallant services in the past notwithstanding, should be deprived of his command. His place as G.O.C. Tigris Corps was taken by General Gorringe, to whom it fell to make the final efforts to relieve General Townshend's force. At first it seemed that Russian pressure on the Turkish flank through Persia might afford some assistance, for Karind was occupied by 10,000 Russians on 12th March, but this hope was disappointed; fresh difficulties arose which were to prove insurmountable. Apart from the chronic lack of transport both by land and water, General Gorringe was hampered by the rising of the Tigris, which increased the flooded area on both banks, by shortage of pontoons, and by his inferiority in the air, our machines being slower than those of the Turks, and hampered, like every branch of the service, by shortage of river craft. Bad weather, too, prevented timely concentration of force at the decisive point, the heavy rain which fell during the first week in April delaying the arrival of much-needed additional transport. He had, however, at his disposal an additional British division, the 13th, commanded by Major-General Maude, fresh from the Dardanelles: it was composed mainly of very young officers and men with limited military training and experience; but, as Plato says, 'experience takes away more than it adds; young people are nearer ideas than old men'. They soon proved their worth, and played a prominent part in many hard-fought battles. After much careful staff work, complicated by repeated postponements due to rain, mud, and floods, General Gorringe massed his force, consisting of 30,000 rifles and 127 guns, for a final effort to overwhelm the Turks, who numbered about 20,000 infantry and 88 guns and occupied an extremely strong entrenched position on both banks of the Tigris. Before dawn on 5th April, the 13th Division moved forward to the assault on the left bank and carried the first and second and third lines of Turkish trenches: on the right bank, too, rapid progress was at first made and, but for the floods, which were of quite exceptional extent in 1916, the Turks might have been compelled to evacuate their main position. But luck was against us once more, and we were again forced to make a frontal attack. In the evening the 13th Division attacked again and, with a loss of some 1,800 men killed and wounded, captured the Fallahiya position, which was consolidated during the night.

At dawn next day (6th April) the attack was renewed, but in even more unfavourable circumstances, for the north-west wind began to blow, driving the waters of the Suwaikiya marsh southwards, thus contracting the Turkish front to some 400 yards. The Turks were fully prepared for the attack, and the 28th and 19th Brigades, who were leading, came under a torrent of fire. On this same date in 1812, the Oxfords, then the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry, had stormed Badajos: Napier has recounted in deathless prose the heroism that marked the conduct of those regiments on that occasion: a pen no less brilliant is needed to do justice to those who maintained on the banks of the Tigris the reputation of their forbears. Of 13 officers and 266 other ranks, only 46 men and no officers survived unscathed: their comrades of the 51st Sikhs and the Leicesters lost over half their effective strength. The water continued to rise, lapping the wheels of the guns, and invading every trench: it seemed likely that the whole strip between marsh and river would be inundated, and the troops had to combat this fresh menace before attempting to oust the Turks from their trenches.

Believing that General Townshend's force was near the end of its supplies, General Gorringe felt bound to renew the attack on the following day: the wounded were collected (a few motor ambulances were available for the first time) and all was ready for a fresh effort, which was made before dawn on 9th April. But many are the disappointments of war. The night was cold and the air heavy with dank mist from river and marsh. Before the men, benumbed by their long vigil, and heavy-eyed with lack of sleep, were fairly aware that they were face to face with the enemy, the sudden blaze of red flares from the trenches only a few hundred yards distant showed that the Turks were awaiting with confidence the approach of that enemy whose impetuous attacks they had so often thrown back, and whom they now hoped to annihilate. Our first line pressed on, the second line faltered, for a moment only, but long enough to be overtaken by the third line, which with succeeding lines pressed on for a time, but finally hesitated and fell back; the first line had meanwhile gained the Turkish trenches, but behind them was confusion, inextricable and irreparable. Again and again officers sprang forward, calling their men to fresh efforts, to be followed sometimes by many, sometimes by few. There was no want of gallant leaders during those fatal hours, but the untried troops, both British and Indian, numb with cold, and unable to recognize their officers, who had in many cases only joined their units a few weeks before, were incapable in the darkness of the sustained efforts necessary for an advance, and when the day dawned further progress became impossible. Before nine o'clock it was clear that the attack had failed.

The floods lifted up their voice: the Tigris raged between its banks, bursting the embankments and rendering successive trenches untenable, and with the mounting sun came a plague of flies, maddening the horses, inflicting upon the wounded unspeakable miseries, and making even momentary repose impossible for those whose day had not yet come.

To renew the engagement on the left bank was now clearly impossible, and General Townshend having informed General Gorringe that he could hold out to the 29th April as the extreme limit, preparations were made for a last attempt, this time on the right bank. It was a forlorn hope: the floods continued to increase, and the weary troops had to spend long hours knee-deep in mud in the attempt to repair the existing embankment and in making others. Supplies were short, and transport largely immobilized. An attack was planned for 12th April, but scarcely had the operation orders been drafted when torrential rain began to fall, accompanied by a high wind, making movement impossible. Once again British plans were brought to naught by bad weather: water from the marshes was driven in large waves over the protective ramparts, flooding all trenches and forcing their occupants to find, under heavy fire, some spot where they might be safe from drowning. Few saved more than their rifles: many wounded men were drowned in the water and mud. Nor were the Turks in better case; they too were flooded out, and in their retreat to fresh positions came under fire from their half-drowned enemies.

General Gorringe decided, as a preliminary to the capture of Bait ʿIsa, to seize an advance enemy work which offered exceptional advantages both as a jumping-off place for the main attack, and as an observation-post for our artillery. The attack was made before dawn in a heavy thunderstorm, which affected the compasses by which the columns were guided, and rendered the ground almost impassable. Nevertheless, the position was occupied and some prisoners captured.[1]

At dawn on the 17th two Brigades moved to the assault under an artillery barrage, bayoneting some Turks whom they found sitting in their trenches, and capturing others: the Gurkhas on our flank pushed forward and captured two guns, which, however, they were unable to get away. They were out of touch with the troops on their right, and our line was in consequence here very vulnerable.

Khalil Pasha, as we now know, realized that our possession of Bait ʿIsa gave us the freedom of the right bank, and he determined on a supreme effort to recover the position. Desultory fighting continued throughout the 16th and 17th, reaching its climax during the night of 17th/18th April. For an hour before sunset there were signs that the Turks proposed to take the offensive: shortly after sundown they came in contact with the British line, overwhelming the two Gurkha battalions, who were short of ammunition, before reinforcements arrived from the 9th Brigade. Having broken through the Gurkhas, the Turks, numbering some 10,000 men, came in contact with and rolled up the remainder of the 9th Brigade, who retreated in confusion, pursued by a scarcely less disorganized mass of enemy troops. They were, however, unable immediately to follow up their success, for Colonel Campbell, who commanded the Brigade, contrived with his staff to rally a great part of the Highland Light Infantry and to bring so heavy a fire to bear on the Turks that they could advance no further for a time. But the retreat continued and involved other units, and the Head-quarters of the 7th Brigade was captured; the 8th Brigade became heavily involved, but covered themselves with glory by their stout defence. Major-General Egerton personally organized a counter-attack and retook his head-quarters. Fighting continued all night; by 5.30 a.m. the Turks were in full retreat. They lost, in killed and wounded, some 5,000 men; we had lost 1,600, but we had also lost Kut, though we were not yet ready to admit the fact. During the next few days the 13th Division made various attempts to advance, but without success, and it soon became clear that nothing could be done on this bank.

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[1] For most conspicuous bravery in this engagement the Victoria Cross was awarded to Naik Shah Ahmad Khan of the 89th Punjabis. 'He was in charge of a machine-gun section in an exposed position, in front of and covering a gap in our new line, within 150 yards of the enemy's entrenched position. He beat off three counter-attacks and worked his gun single-handed after all his men, except two belt-fillers, had become casualties.

'For three hours he held the gap under very heavy fire while it was being made secure. When his gun was knocked out by hostile fire he and his two belt-fillers held their ground with rifles till ordered to withdraw.

'With three men sent to assist him he then brought back his gun, ammunition, and one severely wounded man unable to walk. Finally, he himself returned and removed all remaining arms and equipment except two shovels.

'But for his great gallantry and determination our line must have been penetrated by the enemy.'—*London Gazette*, 26th September, 1916.

It was decided that the 7th Division, supported by the 35th and 36th Brigades, should attack Sannaiyat on 20th April. Weather again interfered and the attack was postponed till the 22nd. Not the enemy but mud defeated our troops. At the last moment the 21st Brigade (Brig.-Gen. Norie) reported that owing to the mud and water on their front they would be unable to advance: their action is inexplicable, for the river had fallen during the night, so that the difficulties confronting them could not have been greater than on the previous day when all arrangements had been agreed to. Both General Younghusband and Corps Head-quarters, however, acquiesced in the inertia of the Brigade Staff and ordered the 19th Brigade, supported by the 28th, to attack alone. They did so at seven o'clock: the artillery barrage was thorough, and it was lifted slowly, according to careful calculations made on the basis of the depth of the water through which the men would have to wade: but the water had fallen nearly two feet during the night and the men made quicker progress than was expected—so that they were actually delayed by the barrage. They advanced under a heavy fire, in many places up to their armpits in mud and water. The Turkish first line was gained by the Highland Battalion [1] and the 92nd Punjabis, who presently reached the Turkish second line trenches. These, like the first line, were full of water, and the intensive bombardment to which the area had been subjected had covered the ground with deep shell-holes, in some of which even unwounded men were drowned: others, of older date, were full of soft mud, in which wounded and unwounded alike were suffocated.

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[1] This battalion, composed of the Black Watch and Seaforths, was formed after 21st January and remained embodied till May when, on the arrival of reinforcements, the Black Watch went back to the 21st Brigade.

The Turks counter-attacked, pressing hard on the 19th Brigade; the brunt fell upon the Highlanders, the 125th (Napier's) Rifles, and the 92nd, who were struggling in the mud which had so choked the locks and barrels of their rifles that the bayonet and the bomb were the only weapons remaining to them. It was a combat so fiercely fought, so dreadful in all its circumstances, as to be almost incredible to those who do not know the selfless heights to which men attain, once or twice in their lives, in the hour of trial. Terrible in their strength, steeled with self-discipline, and proudly determined that in this, the last chance, there should be no failure, the Highlanders held their ground. The word to retire was given without authority by an officer on the flank, where the water was deeper than elsewhere: kindly death took him during the retirement and his name is not publicly known. The Highlanders at first refused to withdraw. A Highland officer, who had been commissioned from the ranks, rallied a group of men not less gallant than he, reminding them that it was still in their power to use cold steel: he fell, and many with him, before they found their flank exposed, and retirement inevitable. They fell back slowly and in good order, as did their Indian comrades of the 92nd and the 125th, showing a spirit that the elements could not tame, nor the pitiful sight of their wounded comrades daunt. While in this predicament, they were counter-attacked by the Turks, with terrible effect. When the 125th attacked it was almost obliterated, and was only saved from total annihilation because it was held up in a bog of barbed wire and could advance no further. Havildar Jaswant Singh, a noted regimental athlete, waded out twenty yards beyond any one else, when he was trapped in hidden wire entanglements and killed. With his death perished the last surviving Rajput of the battalion. They had indeed lived up to their ancestral tradition. Before midday the Turks suddenly raised flags of truce, and several medical officers with stretcher-bearers moved forward from their third line. Firing ceased, and both sides occupied themselves for the rest of the day in the rescue of the disabled men who lay in thousands in the mud.

Why the Turks should have sought a truce is not certainly known: those who from the right bank of the Tigris could see the terrible havoc wrought by our machine guns and artillery regarded it as an admission of defeat, and believed that had it been refused and a further advance made, on the right bank with fresh troops, victory might yet have been achieved. Some of those on the left bank who saw the Highlanders and the 92nd mown down in a bloody shambles, waterlogged and helpless, regarded a further advance as hopeless: but others thought differently: they knew that four Brigades were in reserve, including one regiment, the 8th Gurkhas, which was fresh and intact. They received the order to retire with bitter disappointment: heavy as had been our losses, they were far less numerous than in previous engagements; grievous as were the conditions under which we had laboured, they were not new to the troops; that there was no want of gallant leaders or desperate followers the events of the day had given proof. The weight of the best military opinion amongst Brigade and Divisional staffs on the spot was against further attempts on the left bank after the battle of the Wadi, and in favour of action on the right bank.

The time has perhaps not yet come to assess the individual responsibility of the Divisional, Corps, and Army Commanders of whose reputation Mesopotamia was destined to be the grave. 'To whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more': they had their own difficulties, on which they could not dwell in their dispatches. Of the floods, the weather, and the chronic deficiencies of transport by river and by land enough has been said; but it is necessary to emphasize the shortage of trained staff officers, and the fact that in many cases, of which Dujaila is an outstanding example, formations went into action with staff officers who were strangers both to each other and to units, and under General Officers who barely knew the names of their subordinates. For the conduct of individual units, both British and Indian, no praise can be too high: every unit engaged fought, on one occasion or another, manfully and with good discipline: the so-called non-combatant corps—the rank and file Transport and Medical services, ill paid and worse clad, and by an evil Indian tradition somewhat despised by their comrades in the fighting-line, behaved worthily: shame there was none on any side. All alike, from the Army Commander to the rank and file, were victims of the circumstances in which they found themselves, and in particular of the fact that the force had been set a task beyond its powers, whether by Whitehall, Simla, or Sir John Nixon, or by the last with the concurrence of the first, we need not inquire. In each successive engagement since Ctesiphon, the chances of victory and defeat were so nicely balanced that success always seemed within our grasp, only to elude us at the last moment.

As a forlorn hope the *Julnar* was sent up stream on 24th April, as described in Chapter VII, with provisions for the garrison. The idea had been put forward by the General Staff early in March, but was considered impracticable by the Senior Naval Officer, who pointed out, with perfect truth, that the progress of any laden craft against the stream would be so slow as to render it an easy target for the enemy's artillery. It was pressed again by General Lake during a visit of inspection by the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Squadron, Vice-Admiral Sir R. Wemyss, who informed General Lake that the chances of success were so small that he wished, before calling for volunteers, to have an assurance that it would definitely improve the prospects of relief. The assurance was given; the *Julnar* was made ready at ʿAmara, in circumstances of considerable but quite inevitable publicity, and loaded with three weeks' provisions. She was stopped at Maqasis, out of range of our guns and those of General Townshend. It was perhaps better so, for there is little reason to think that three weeks' grace would have sufficed. We had not the transport to bring up within this period a force sufficient to carry the Turkish positions by a succession of massed attacks. The attempt would doubtless have been made, and further lives sacrificed, but the result would have been the same.

After the loss of the *Julnar*, the Army Commander bowed to the inevitable, and on 25th April it was announced that there were to be no more frontal attacks. The troops were worn out: within three weeks we had lost 10,000 men, or a quarter of the whole force. In some formations the percentage was much higher: the 28th Brigade had lost over 100 per cent. of its normal numerical strength and 190 per cent. of its establishment of British officers, the casualty lists having swallowed up not only the original force but a large proportion of successive reinforcements. From January to April the Tigris Corps had lost 23,000 men in battle casualties, not including the sick, whose numbers were also very great.

From first to last these operations had involved the British Empire in over 40,000 casualties, including the Kut garrison but excluding sick men, the majority of whom eventually became fit for duty. The number of those who were killed in action or died of wounds was about 8,000.[1] The Turkish losses during the same period are estimated at 10,000 men; but against this they had added enormously to the reputation of their army, and had in addition been able to turn to good account, throughout such portions of the world as could be reached by the press agencies of the Central Powers, our incredibly stupid attempt to secure by British gold what British military virtue was unable to compass.

The fall of Kut reverberated through India and the East, but had little outward effect in Mesopotamia, where the event had long ago

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[1] During the whole course of the War in South Africa of 1899–1901 the total number killed in action was 5,774, whilst 2,018 died of wounds (vide L. S. Amery, '*The Times*' *History of the War in South Africa*, vol. vii).

LIEUT.-COMMANDER C. H. COWLEY
V.C., R.N.V.R.
Murdered by Turks, 25th April 1916

been discounted. Few, even in the ranks of the Armies in Mesopotamia, could have thought it possible that within 12 months we should avenge ourselves by capturing Baghdad; or that among the unsuccessful Divisional Commanders on the Tigris there should be found the man who, at the hour chosen by him, would roll up and hurl back the armies that had so long and so successfully opposed our advance.

To the Garrison of Kut[1]

Battle and toil survived, is this the end
Of all your high endeavour? Shall the stock
That death and desert braved be made the mock
Of gazing crowds, nor in the crowd a friend?
Shall they who ever to their will did bend—
From Zain to Ctesiphon—the battle-shock
Fall prey to lean starvation's craven flock
And the dark terrors that her train attend?

You leave the field; but those who, pressing by,
Take up the torch, whene'er your name is named
Shall fight more stoutly, while your company,
Its task performed, shall carry unashamed
Into captivity a courage high:
The body prisoner, but the mind untamed.

R. W. BULLARD.

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[1] Published in *The Basra Times*, 25th May 1916.

CHAPTER IX[1]

VAE VICTIS: THE FATE OF THE PRISONERS

'The Turks are the only gentlemen in the East, whilst all the remaining nations there are more or less morally degenerate and politically untrustworthy.' BISMARCK.

'The Turks are savages with whom no civilized Christian nation ought to form any alliance.' EDMUND BURKE.

'Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbashis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope to clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.'
W. E. GLADSTONE (*of Bulgaria*). Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, ii, 162.

The march to Baghdad. Cruelty of Turks to prisoners: the truth discredited and the facts withheld from British Government. Cruelty to sick at Baghdad. The march northwards. Neglect and cruelty. United States Consuls and citizens endeavour to relieve sufferings. Mr. Morgenthau. Mr. Engert.

THOUGH the garrison of Kut, from the moment of its surrender, played no further part in the campaign in Mesopotamia, it is necessary for the purposes of this book to deal at some length with the events that befell it. The story has, it is true, been told in a paper (Cd. 9208) presented to Parliament in November 1918 (before the Armistice), and the *Official History* devotes six of its two thousand pages to the subject. The public memory, however, is notoriously short, and I am frequently surprised to find among the generality of Englishmen the belief, presumably of Crimean origin, that the Turks behaved during the war as clean fighters, who had no quarrel with us, and that they could be relied upon to treat their prisoners as humanely as their circumstances and standards of comfort permitted.[2]

By placing on record in this context the manner in which the Turks and their Arab associates treated their prisoners, it is far from my desire to rake among the dying embers for sparks which may serve to kindle flames of hatred amongst the rising generation. Yet I would not have them grow up ignorant of the profound difference between our attitude in this country to-day towards the suffering of helpless human beings and the attitude of those against whom we fought, who were neither better nor worse than nations with similar traditions and environment. Such happenings are a concomitant not only of war, but of civil anarchy, which may entail consequences worse by far than war to vast numbers of individuals.

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[1] The following are the principal authorities consulted: *Official History*, vol. ii, Command Paper 9208, Barber, Bishop, Keeling, Mousley, Sandes, Still, Townshend.

[2] Their abstention from the use of poison gas has been cited in support of this contention. I believe, however, that this was due solely to German doubts as to whether the Turks could be relied on to exercise the requisite skill and discretion in its employment and to the peculiar climatic conditions in Mesopotamia. On the general question see 'The "Clean Fighting Turk"', by Sir Mark Sykes in *The Times* of 20th February 1917.

Article 7 of the Hague Convention of 1909 prescribes that '*Les prisonniers de guerre seront traités . . . sur le même pied que les troupes du Gouvernement qui les aura capturés.*' Only four short years before this article was drafted Russian prisoners of war, fed supposedly in conformity with this clause, had died in thousands from lack of suitable nourishment. It is surely self-evident that the food and treatment of prisoners of war should be that necessary to keep them in health, without reference to the customary regimen of their capturers. Yet during the war Turkish prisoners, who had rarely seen meat more than once a week at most, received a daily ration of beef or mutton. British and Indian prisoners were only entitled even in theory to the same ration, clothing, and treatment as Turkish soldiers: in practice, as will be seen, they received far less and perished miserably by thousands in consequence.

The treatment of prisoners, whether in war or in peace, has in all ages of the world's history been generally inhuman, and in many countries is still a disgrace to humanity,[1] but this fact does not absolve those responsible from blame for their failure, since the war, to do anything to amend or strengthen the rules of international law on the subject of the treatment of war prisoners. The formal outlawry of war should not deter humane men from setting up under the League of Nations or otherwise an organization designed to prevent a repetition of the horrors, only a tithe of which are recorded in this chapter. Scenes scarcely less terrible were enacted in other theatres.

Reference has already been made in Chapter VII to the treatment of the garrison immediately after the surrender of the town. About eleven hundred of the worst hospital cases were repatriated; they alone escaped the experience of becoming, as Enver Pasha put it, in a charming little message to General Townshend, 'the honoured guests of the Turkish nation'; the rank and file, he added, would be sent to Asia Minor to be interned in places in a good climate near the sea.

Khalil Pasha was warned by General Townshend that the men of the garrison were too emaciated to walk: he promised in a written reply that every care should be taken of them, and that they should be transported by steamer to Baghdad and thence by carts. As a matter of fact he must have already given orders that all but the officers, and a few men who could not stand, were to proceed by road, for during that night and the following day the greater part were marched eight miles up-river to Shamran, where they were to lie, exposed to wind and rain, ringed round by sentries. The journey took eight hours, at the end of which, and for some days later, the prisoners were given a few Turkish ration biscuits, which had apparently been rejected as unfit for issue to troops. They were made 'of the coarsest unhusked barley, not unmixed with earth, as hard as iron, and many of them green with mould'. Yet the *Julnar*, with 200 tons of rations, was in Turkish hands only a few miles down-stream. These biscuits were ravenously devoured by the starving men, over three hundred of whom died in the agonies of gastro-enteritis during the first few days at Shamran, whilst the Turkish medical officers, to quote Major Barber of the Indian Medical Service, 'chatted with a great show of politeness, deploring the war and the suffering entailed, and spoke of the humanitarian nature of our profession which enabled us to meet on common ground'. A German petty officer whom Major Barber met knew what was in store for the prisoners: 'Not so many as ten in a hundred will ever see their homes again', said he. Major Barber thought he was exaggerating, and so did the General Staff in Mesopotamia, who discredited almost every report of brutality and cruelty till the bitter truth could no longer be hidden.[1] Those who knew something of the Turks and Turkey were under no such illusion—witness Mr. R. W. Bullard's noble lines, which precede this chapter.

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[1] For an interesting discussion of the subject see an article by Dr. Fitzgerald Lee in *The Army Quarterly* for 1921, which is notable principally for the fact that it avoids all reference to the fate of British and Indian prisoners in Turkey during the war.

Few of those who died at Shamran were buried; their bodies were cast into a near-by ravine, where in July 1917 some of their skulls were found. General Melliss, who had insisted on leaving hospital and joining his men in camp, and with him Colonel Chitty, did what he could to alleviate conditions. But he soon fell ill again and had to go by boat to Baghdad.

After a few days at Shamran the Turks realized that few of their captives would reach Baghdad alive unless further food was sent, and General Gorringe was permitted to send up some supplies, which saved many lives, at all events for a time; but before these rations arrived many of the men had sold boots and clothing to Arabs for a few handfuls of dates and black bread.

On 6th May the rank and file left Shamran under an escort of Arab cavalry: the men had to carry on their backs such kit as they possessed—water-bottles, cooking-pots, blankets, spare clothes—for transport animals there were none. The British soldiers left camp singing indomitably: they were next seen at Baghaila, where, says Major Barber, 'we passed the other boat with the sick on board, she was tying up there to take on several hundreds of sick men of ours who had fallen out on the march up from Kut. We heard afterwards that she could not take them all, but she filled herself up to the utmost capacity, and we thanked our stars that we were not travelling in her, for the discomfort on board was extreme, and several deaths occurred . . . the food gave out, and altogether they passed through a horrible ten days.'

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[1] So little were the British Government told as to the actual treatment by the Turks of the wounded at Kut that Lord Desart in the House of Lords on 16th May 1916 stated that it was now known 'that those who are sick and wounded have been handed to the British authorities by the Turks, to whom in this respect I think one should pay a tribute in comparison with other of our enemies'.

The scene at Baghaila, which Major Barber witnessed only at a distance, was one of anguish and misery. Those who remained on the bank were incapable of marching farther in the burning heat.[1] They tried to get on board a steamer for Baghdad, but there was room for few, and the rest were driven back with blows.

'The march itself', says the *Official History*, 'was a nightmare. The Arab soldiery freely used sticks and whips to flog the stragglers on, and although in some cases they kept the promise given to the British officers that men who fell out from sickness would be put on camels and donkeys, many died by the roadside. Many men had neither boots nor water-bottles left, and at 'Aziziya the Turks were obliged to leave 350 of them, crowded together in miserable insanitary buildings, to follow later by river.'

Captain Mousley gives a more vivid picture than the somewhat complacent account of Major Barber.

> 'We tingled with anger and shame', he says, 'at seeing on the other bank a sad little column of British troops who had marched up from Kut driven by a wild crowd of Kurdish horsemen who brandished sticks and what looked like whips. The eyes of our men stared from white faces, drawn long with the suffering of a too tardy death, and they held out their hands towards our boat. As they dragged one foot after another some fell, and those with the rearguard came in for blows from cudgels and sticks. I saw one Kurd strike a British soldier who was limping along, he reeled under the blows. . . . It seemed that half their number were a few miles ahead and the rest strewed the road to Kut. Some have been thrashed to death, some killed, and some robbed of their kit and left to be tortured by the Arabs. I have been told by a sergeant that he saw one of the *Sumana* crew killed instantly by a blow on the head from a stirrup iron swung by a Kurdish horseman for stopping on the road for a few seconds. Men were dying of cholera and dysentery and often fell out from sheer weakness. . . . Every now and then we stopped to bury our dead. . . . Enteritis, a form of cholera, attacked the whole garrison after Kut fell, and the change of food no doubt helped this. . . . A man turned green and foamed at the mouth. His

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[1] For a description of similar conditions during the operations of 1859 in India see Fortescue's History of the British Army, vol. xiii, p. 393.

eyes became sightless and the most terrible moans conceivable came from his inner being. . . . They died, one and all, with terrible suddenness. One night several Indians were missing . . . jumped overboard to end their wretchedness. . . . Major . . . was, so soon as we disembarked, left lying uncovered from the sun on a stretcher . . . covered by thousands of flies. Now and then a wasted arm rose a few inches as if to brush them off but fell back inadequate to the task. . . . One saw British soldiers in a similar state dying of enteritis with a green ooze issuing from their lips, their mouths fixed open, in and out of which flies walked. . . . Details of other similar cases I won't write about.'

Those who survived this ordeal—which involved a march of over 100 miles in 8½ days at the hottest time of year—were marched through the crowded streets of Baghdad for some hours. As they passed the citadel they saw at one of the barred windows three Englishmen, Cree, Tod, and Dexter, who had been arrested in Baghdad when war broke out but had been allowed to leave Turkey by way of Mersina.[1] They had patriotically returned to Mesopotamia and had been attached to Townshend's force. When captured they were arrested on the charge of breaking parole, falsely alleged to have been given during their former captivity; after spending some months of suspense in prison they were acquitted and treated as prisoners of war.

In Baghdad, if anywhere in Asia Minor, our men might have expected food and shelter: a few, indeed, came under the care of Colonel Hehir and some other British Medical Officers, who were devotedly assisted by the French nuns domiciled in Baghdad,[2] and to some extent by the Turkish doctors, who, however, had their hands full with their own wounded and had practically no drugs or appliances. The United States Consul, Mr. Brissell, who died of disease during the year, played a noble part. His position was not a little difficult and delicate. If he showed himself over-conspicuous in charity for the prisoners he ran the risk of finding his efforts frustrated by Turkish suspicion. He none the less found means to give much help from the funds of the American Red Cross. He continually visited hospitals and camps; for the latter he sent a daily supply of sheep. Such, however, was the prevalent disorganization and so great the misery that he could only reach a few of the captives. On their first arrival in Baghdad all but the worst of the sick and wounded had been placed in an unsheltered enclosure on the right bank of the Tigris, at some distance from the river. Those who could walk were rapidly sent northwards. Of the remainder, about 500, many died, though after repeated protests from the British Medical Officers the camp was eventually shifted to the river bank a mile below the city, where the trees offered a little shade from the scorching rays of the sun. Those in another enclosure in a bare field near the railway station were less fortunate. Indian and British were confined together with the object of encouraging strife between them. No water was brought to them. For some days, mad with thirst, they struggled round a tiny foul pool into which the sick crawled and collapsed.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 4.2.15.

[2] After the occupation of Baghdad a small grant was made to their funds by the Army Commander, in recognition of their self-sacrificing devotion.

On 8th August 22 officers and 323 sick men were sent downstream from Baghdad in exchange for a corresponding number of Turks. They reached Basra a few days later and were hastily sent off to India; whilst in Basra they were forbidden to speak of what they had suffered and seen. The blight of 'Military Intelligence' and the censorship enveloped them—presumably because the force had been repeatedly told, what all in authority knew to be false, that the prisoners were being well treated by the Turks, though of course certain hardships were unavoidable, &c., &c. A more imaginative commander might, like Phillipon, speaking of English prison-hulks before Picurina (Napier, *Peninsular War*, Book XVI, Ch. 5), have published the true facts, and have recalled to his soldiers' recollection how worse than death it was to be an inmate of a Turkish prison; but there was a belief in Indian military circles, not less erroneous than it was deep-seated, that it was bad policy to speak ill of Turks or the Turkish Government, which was always represented as the misguided victim of German intrigues.

There remains to be told what happened to the main mass of the prisoners. Week after week, through June and July, parties of them had left Baghdad, following the route already taken by their officers. As far as Samarra, seventy miles north of Baghdad, they travelled by rail crowded into open cattle-trucks: from there they went afoot. Their state of preparation for a march of 500 miles, their physical condition, and the equipment they possessed for withstanding one of the fiercest summers of the globe, can be pictured from what has already been described. In all its details it will never be known, for those who could tell the worst did not survive the journey. Some, especially the younger men of the Hampshires and Norfolks, suffered repeatedly at the hands of Turkish soldiers the worst indignity that a man may inflict on the body of another;[1] they were too weak to resist their captors, or the ravages of the foul disease imparted to them. Some sick men were certainly buried, while yet living, by the roadside.

Apart, however, from these isolated cases, enough is known to enable us to form some idea of what our countrymen and their Indian comrades suffered. It happened that a small party of officers, delayed by illness, was sent north *after* the first batches of men had departed. These officers followed the same track, and presently an urgent message from one of them reached Baghdad, addressed to the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, pressing for a hospital establishment and one of the British staff to be sent at once to Samarra. Equipment and staff were immediately ready, though it took the Turkish authorities five days to provide the necessary pass for leaving the city. At Samarra were then collected the hundreds of sick who had fallen out of the march during its first stages. They were picked up from the roadside where they lay in the agonies of dysentery, just as they chanced to drop, disregarded and deserted. All possible care was given them, but many were beyond help. It was clear enough what would have happened to them all, but for the chance of the state of things being discovered in time. It was a chance that was not allowed to recur; a subsequent party of officers was carefully sent from Baghdad by another route.

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[1] See also Still, p. 201.

But it was only those who failed on the first part of the march who could be brought to Samarra; the main body passed on and out of reach. Their track was still followed by the same group of officers, and the sights they saw, at villages and halting-places all along the road, hardly bear telling. There were parties of men lying exhausted under any shelter they could find, in all stages of dysentery and starvation; some dying, some dead; half-clothed, without boots, having sold everything they could to buy a little milk. Only here and there had an attendant of some kind been left to look after them; generally there was no one but the Arab villagers, who mercilessly robbed them, or the under-officer of the local police-post, who stared indifferently and protested that he had no authority to give help. The dead lay unburied, plundered, and stripped of their last clothing. All across the desert, at one place after another, these sights were repeated: starving and dying men, in tens and twenties, lay in any scrap of shade or mud-hovel that might be allowed them and awaited their end. Some had to wait long. Many weeks later, at a desert village about three days' journey from Aleppo, there was found a group of six British soldiers and about a dozen Indians, who for three months had lain on the bare ground of a mud-walled enclosure, subsisting solely on a few scraps thrown to them by Arabs or passing caravans. The Englishmen had numbered fourteen; eight had died, and of the survivors only one was still able to crawl two or three hundred yards to a place where there was water. Thus it was that of the men who surrendered at Kut more than three thousand, British and Indian, have never been heard of at all.

The last part of the march, over the mountain ranges of the Amanus, had been the worst of all, and here too in many places had been enacted the same shameful tragedy.

General Melliss, whilst at Brusa, heard of these facts and sent a full and detailed report to Enver Pasha, whom he earnestly besought to telegraph instructions that would ensure proper treatment of our men and save many lives. Enver Pasha replied, with a dignity suited to the occasion, that having given orders for the proper treatment of our prisoners, he could not believe that what General Melliss had reported was true.

The inhabitants of Tikrit (where Saladin was born) did not belie their ancient reputation for savagery and brutality. They treated our men abominably. Of this place Captain Shakeshaft (2nd Norfolks) wrote in his diary:[1] 'We met a number of unfortunate British and Indian soldiers who were standing together at the door of a miserable yard, where they were herded together. They looked ghastly . . . The Arabs used to bring milk and eggs to sell and asked exorbitant prices: consequently they would soon have no money and would die of starvation and neglect. There were no guards over them and they were completely abandoned. Sometimes, when a sick man would crawl out of the hovel they lived in, Arabs would throw stones and chase him back into the yard.'

Of Sharqat he wrote (13th June): 'We found a large number of men lying in some outhouses in a most pitiful condition. Most of them were slowly dying of dysentery and neglect . . .' Of Mosul (17th June) he wrote: 'Most of the men looked half starved and very ill. The place was in a filthy condition and words would fail to express the sanitary arrangements.' Ras-al-'Ain (20th June): 'We found six British soldiers, in a fearfully emaciated condition, lying in a filthy stable. Of course, the Turks had done nothing for them. One of the men said, "We are like rats in a trap and they are just slowly killing us".' Islahiya, north of Aleppo (23rd June): 'A German warrant officer told me that there were a number of British troops suffering from dysentery in some Arab tents nearby . . . He said they were being starved to death. He had been to see them several times, but the Turks had warned him off.' (24th June): 'We came to a spring and lying around it were three British soldiers . . . all were horribly emaciated and in a dreadful state. They had been left behind by a column that had passed two days ago, as they could not march.'

Captain Mousley, who was with the same party, visited the hospital at Nisibin, and has recorded what he saw as follows:

> 'A bare strip of filthy ground ran down to the river some two hundred yards off. Along the wall, protected by only a few scanty leaves and loose grass flung over some tatti work of branches through which the fierce sun streamed with unabated violence, I saw some human forms which no eye but one acquainted with the

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[1] Moberly, ii, p. 534.

phenomenon of the trek could possibly recognize as British soldiery. They were wasted to wreathes of skin hanging upon a bone frame. For the most part they were stark naked except for a rag around their loins, their garments having been sold to buy food, bread, milk, and medicine. Their eyes were white with the death hue. Their sunken cheeks were covered with the unshaven growth of weeks. One had just died and two or three corpses just been removed, the Turkish attendant no doubt having heard of the approach of an officers' column. But the corpses had lain there for days. Some of the men were too weak to move. The result of the collection of filth and the insanitary state in the centre of which these men lay in a climate like this can be imagined. Water was not regularly supplied to them and those unable to walk had to crawl to the river for water. One could see their tracks through the dirt and grime. Three or four hard black biscuits lay near the dead man. Other forms near by I thought dead, but they moved unconsciously again. One saw the bee-hive phenomenon of flies which swarmed by the million going in and out of living men's open mouths.'

Of the march to Ras-al-ʿAin he writes:

'The padre (the Rev. H. Spooner) was awfully good and diligent in assisting men, but, nevertheless, from out the night one heard the high Indian wail, "margaya, sahib, margaya", "dying, sahib, dying". For the most part British soldiers stayed with their friends until they were dead. I saw some of the finest examples history could produce of the British soldier's self-sacrifice for and fidelity to his friend. It was a grim reality for the sick of the column. I shall never forget one soldier who could go no further. He fell resignedly on to the ground, the stump of a cigarette in his mouth, and with a tiredness born of long suffering, buried his head in his arms to shut out the disappearing column and smoked on. Night was around us and Arab fires near. We were a half-mile behind the column. I was quite exhausted. One sick soldier was hanging on to a strap of my donkey, my orderly on another. His feet were all blood, as his boots had been taken from him. A soldier went to the sick man behind, but I did not see him again. Shortly after, on the same awful night, I saw another man crawling on all fours over the desert in the dark quite alone. He said he hoped to reach the next halt, and get his promised ride for half an hour, and by that time he might go on again to the next place. We picked him up, and I gave him my strap. Another sick orderly held him up. He was all bone, and could scarcely lurch along. We eventually got him to the halt, and gave him a place in a cart.

'At another place we came across a British soldier whose suffering had been so acute that he had gone out of his mind and lost his memory. He had been left in a cave, and had evidently eaten nothing for days, but had crawled down to the water. He was delirious and jabbering, and thought he was a dog. We carried him along in the cart to the next camp.'

In his book, *Bengal Lancer*, published in 1930, Captain Yeats-Brown, who was captured in November 1915, whilst operating by air against the Turkish communications, writes:

'I saw a party of twenty English soldiers, who had been marched from Kirkuk across the mountains, arriving moribund on the barrack square at Mosul. They were literally skeletons alive, and they brought with them three skeletons dead. One of the living men kept making piteous signs to his mouth with a stump of an arm in which maggots crawled. Presently he died in a fit.

'Then there was the saddest tea-party at which I have ever assisted. We had bribed a sentry to allow us to give two of these men a meal of bread and buffalo-cream which we had prepared out of our slender resources. Our guests told us that they were kept in a cellar, with hardly enough room to lie down. Only drinking water and bread were supplied to them. They could not wash. Three times a day they were allowed to go to the latrines, and sometimes not then, for if a prisoner possessed anything that the sentry wanted, he was not allowed to go until he had parted with it.

'When our pay was given us, and an opportunity occurred to bribe the guards, it was a heart-breaking business to decide which of the sufferers we should attempt to save. Some were too far gone to help, others might manage to live without our smuggled food. But it was little enough we could do before we were transferred to Aleppo.

'The soldier survivors followed. Many were clubbed to death by the sentries and stripped naked. Others, more fortunate, were found dead by their companions after the night's halt, when they turned out to face another day of misery.'

These very numerous and similar cases were well known to General Townshend, but he was of a forgiving nature. In November 1921 he wrote to Mustafa Kamal Pasha 'I am devoted heart and soul to your cause, and am proud of the affection of the Turks for me.' No wonder the Turkish troops at Adana 'cheered like blazes and shouted *Inshallah*' (Sherson, pp. 385, 390).

When the thinned ranks of these prisoners arrived within sight of the Mediterranean their journey was over for the time, but it was only a new stage of suffering that began for them. Though so many had been lost on the way, the survivors were still numerous enough to form a valuable army of labourers. The Baghdad railway only wanted the piercing of a few tunnels to be complete from Constantinople to the Syrian desert, and the prisoners were to be employed in finishing the work. Most of the Indians seem to have been left at Ras-al-ʿAin, on the way, where the line was being pushed forward over the flat plain to Mosul. The rest of them, and all the British, were brought to the region of Tarsus and Adana, the south-eastern corner of Asia Minor, which was the centre of the tunnel-blasting operations in the Taurus and Amanus ranges. The construction of the railway was in the hands of a German company, to which the prisoners, between two and three thousand in number, were now consigned. A few days' rest was allowed them before they were set to work.

They were, of course, absolutely incapable of work of any kind, after all they had been through. Nevertheless they were distributed among various working camps of the neighbourhood, and were somehow driven to their task. In the Bilemedik region on the north side of the Taurus mountains, the few hundred British prisoners who had been taken at the Dardanelles the summer before were already, it seems, employed on the railway. Their case was apparently tolerable; but it was a very different matter for the exhausted remnant of the Kut prisoners. These naturally broke down at once, and were soon recognized by their employers as useless. Already the hospitals at the various places were full, and the rate of mortality was very high. By September the Railway Construction Company had handed them back to the Turkish authorities, deciding that it was hopeless to try to get work out of them for the time being.

If they could not be made use of, the Turks had no wish to keep them in that district, where (as will be seen in a moment) kind and liberal care was at hand for them. They were to be sent to camps in the interior of Asia Minor, and early in September an instalment of a thousand British prisoners was thither dispatched. They were placed in railway trucks that went as far as the break in the line at the Taurus mountains, and over this steep and difficult range they had then to march on foot. It was a journey of several days before the northward continuation of the railway could be reached at Bozanti. The way in which an operation of this kind may be mismanaged in Turkey is almost incredible, familiar as the details become by repetition: it is a fact that these men were sent off without food for the journey, and that no provision was made for them at any point of the road. It was, perhaps, a worse experience than that which a few weeks before had seemed the limit of possible suffering. The men were forced forward by gendarmes with the butt-ends of their rifles, till of sheer inanition many had dropped and died. A few managed to take refuge in certain German and Austrian military camps in the Taurus; but the main body was somehow beaten and driven across the mountain range. It was like one thing only—a scene from Dante's Inferno; the description was that of an Austrian officer who witnessed it.

But the sick and exhausted stragglers were not now beyond the reach of help. There were charitable Americans, not far off, who had shown the most active kindness to the prisoners on their first arrival from the east, and who now redoubled their efforts. Through the exertions of the United States Consul at Mersina, who made urgent appeals to the military authorities, all the sick that could be collected were brought to the hospitals of Adana, and in particular to an American college at Tarsus. For the majority it was too late; it is said that of several hundred who were the first to reach these two places, less than half survived. Yet whatever was possible was done for these men by American ladies and doctors, whose services are thankfully remembered. Perhaps the best of these services was not the material benefit, timely as it was, but the less measurable effects of sympathy and friendly interest on men whose sufferings had for so long been watched with complacent nonchalance.

Their subsequent treatment is beyond the scope of this work, but mention must be made of the treatment of those of the garrison who reached Afion-Qara-Hisar. This place had a hideous record for the habitual flogging of prisoners for the most trifling offences, while the place was under the control of a certain Turkish naval officer. This man ruled with a cow-hide whip, from which the offender received a given number of lashes on his bare back. Many specific instances are known and noted. Fortunately the man's behaviour became notorious, and early in 1917 the Turkish Government, under pressure, removed him. He had had time, however, to add to the burden of the unhappy men from Kut, whose appearance when they reached Afion is vividly remembered by the prisoners who were already there. Some of them naked, many half out of their minds with exhaustion, most of them rotten with dysentery, this band of survivors was received with deep sympathy by the rest, who did all in their power to restore them, small as their own resources were. In very many cases it was too late. The sick men were placed in the camp hospital; but this was a hospital in not much more than the name, for though there was a Turkish doctor in attendance, with some rough Turkish orderlies, medicines were non-existent, and a man too ill to look after himself had a very poor chance. Deaths were frequent; the dead were buried by their comrades in the Christian cemetery of the town. All this time, close at hand, there was a party of British officers imprisoned at Afion, two of whom were officers of the medical service. Yet all communication between officers and men was strictly forbidden, under heavy penalty, throughout the evil days of 1916 and even later. English doctors had thus to wait inactive, knowing that the men were dying almost daily, a few yards off, for mere want of proper care.

The statistical record, of the effect on the prisoners of the treatment described above, constitutes a record of callous brutality without parallel in civilized warfare and unequalled in the records of savage warfare. Of the 2,592 British rank and file led into captivity from Kut, more than 1,700 or nearly 70 per cent. died in captivity. Of Indian rank and file, about 9,300, and followers, about 2,500 died—exact statistics are not available, but the actual number is probably greater rather than less. Turkish negligence to provide food and clothing was directly responsible for many of the deaths. In other cases, death was due to the brutality of the Arab inhabitants of the country between Kut and Nisibin, who pillaged our men and habitually ill-treated them, without any serious attempt by the Turks either individually or collectively to restrain them. To the ears of those who survived, and those who had knowledge of these events and of similar incidents which happened later, the wording of the proclamation, drafted by Sir Mark Sykes but sponsored by the Cabinet at home and put into General Maude's mouth (see Chapter XIV), rang hollow and false.

It remains to refer briefly to an aspect of the general question of the treatment of our prisoners in Turkey, which has received perhaps less attention than it deserves. We know that the United States Consul at Baghdad was very pessimistic about the treatment in store for them, and declared that we ought at any cost to have cut our way out of Kut. We know that the Turkish Government had refused to allow either the staff of the United States Embassy at Constantinople or United States Consuls to see the prisoners, on the ground that they were being dealt with according to the Hague Convention, a statement which, if true, would have been the best reason for permitting inspection (Keeling, p. 12). The efforts of the United States Ambassadors, Mr. Morgenthau and his successor Mr. Elkus, were unceasing,[1] and after the entry of the United States into the war their work was continued by Monsieur de Willebois, the Netherlands Minister. The U.S. Ambassadors had ample funds, their Government was not without influence in the counsels of Europe, they had representatives at every important centre, and they were parties to the Hague Convention. They were in close touch with the German element in Turkey, which, with a few notable exceptions, showed humanity to our prisoners and evinced horror at their fate. Yet they were able to do little or nothing. It is scarcely conceivable that they were unable to keep their Government informed as to what was happening, but it is certain their reports received no publicity. No official protest was made by the President of the United States, who was at this period inditing endless didactic notes to Great Britain on the finer points of the law of nations, as it affected the mercantile interests of United States' citizens. He was not slow, like Job's counsellor, to darken counsel by words without knowledge: the claims of humanity were ever on his lips, but the great tragedy enacted almost at the doors of his agents, of which the foregoing pages are but an incomplete recital, evoked at the time no public expression of horror; and when, during 1915, it became generally known in America that a million Armenians, men, women, and children, had perished in circumstances of cold-blooded cruelty, in pursuance of a policy from which Chingiz Khan himself would have recoiled, the President of the United States was moved to expressions of sympathy which it would be an abuse of words to describe as pious or platonic.[1] It is true that the machinery of civilization broke down everywhere; in Turkey it never began to work. If, God forbid, such things should happen to the world again, will the well-laid schemes to which good men and women are to-day devoting so much time and thought fare any better? It has been suggested that the Turks have undergone since the war a genuine and lasting spiritual rebirth;[2] that such changes have occurred in the past few will deny, but to recognize them except in retrospect is not easy, if indeed it be possible. To the historian the perspective of time is as vital as is that of distance to the artist.

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[1] Mr. C. Van H. Engert, as Secretary to the U.S. Embassy under Mr. Morgenthau, was especially active, and many British and Indian prisoners owe their lives to his intervention. In particular he personally rescued Mr. T. D. Cree from a Turkish hospital where he lay completely neglected at the point of death.

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[1] For an independent contemporary account of the official Turkish attitude towards the Armenian massacres see Morgenthau. So completely did Tala'at Pasha ignore the paper protests of the U.S. Ambassador that in August 1915 he asked Mr. Morgenthau to obtain from United States Life Insurance Companies a complete list of their Armenian policy-holders: 'they are practically all dead now', he said, 'and have no heirs to collect the money. It, of course, all escheats to the State. The Government is the beneficiary now' (ibid., p. 223).

[2] Toynbee, *Contemporary Review*, October 1929; compare with 'The murderous tyranny of the Turks', 1917.

CHAPTER X[1]

1916

> 'If I had not reflected well upon the subject, my experience of the war in Portugal and Spain . . . would have shown me the advantage which an army has against the enemy when the people . . . are on its side in the contest. But reflection, and, above all, experience, have shown me the exact extent of this advantage in a military point of view; and I only beg that those who have to contend with the French will not be diverted . . . by any notion that the people, when armed and arrayed, will be of . . . much use to them.' DUKE OF WELLINGTON, 11*th October* 1809.

Functions of Political Officers. Billeting. Requisitioning of River craft. Land Blockade. Military demands on local resources. Work of Military Governors. Civil Gaols. Customs Department. Visit of Col. Sir Mark Sykes. Sykes-Picot Agreement. Visit of Captain Aubrey Herbert and Captain George Lloyd. Recruitment of Civil Administration. Political Office at Basra. Miss Gertrude Bell. Ibn Sa'ud. Affairs in Persia. Sir Percy Sykes's Mission. Indo-European Telegraph Department. Military Censorship. Persian 'Arabistan and the Bakhtiari. E. B. Soane.

WE must now leave the battle-field and the prison camps, in which we have seen, in the closest juxtaposition, the heights to which men worthily inspired may attain, and the depths to which humanity may sink once the inhibitions and conventions of civilization have been undermined by war (or by anarchy) and direct our minds for a time to the application, behind the lines of the Expeditionary Force, of the arts of peace.

The problem that confronted the Civil Administration in 1916 was twofold: on the one hand we were responsible for re-creating and operating the machinery of civil government in the Basra wilayat; on the other hand we had to meet the increasing demands of the military authorities for local material, foodstuffs, and labour. The staff of the Chief Political Officer, known as Political or Assistant Political Officers, were officially recognized everywhere as the proper intermediaries between the army and the civil population. During the first twelve months of the campaign innumerable local questions arising out of the military operations on the Tigris and Euphrates had occupied their energies almost to the exclusion of other matters. It proved possible during 1916 to construct an administrative framework consistent with international law, and acceptable to the military authorities. It was a task which imposed a very heavy strain on us all, and especially on the political officers in the country districts, who had to introduce order where chaos had reigned for many decades. It fell to them to explain to every petty headman the precise nature of the orders issued by the military authorities, and to insist on their execution; to lend support to the authority of well-meaning but weak Shaikhs, and to curb the tyrannical tendencies of the stronger, lest the resentment of their followers should find expression in fresh disorders. Many of the Assistant Political Officers had no garrison at their head-quarters as a reminder of the ultimate authority by which they acted: when there was a garrison, its presence gave rise to innumerable incidents, petty in themselves, but necessitating intervention. Thefts of military stores were of constant occurrence, provoking demands from the local commanders for the collective punishment of all who might be implicated. Petty brigandage was not uncommon, resulting in military reprisals, in which the political officer was called upon to take a part, to ensure, so far as he could, that the punishment fell on the guilty, and to act simultaneously as interpreter to the military commander and representative of the Chief Political Officer. The attitude of the Army as a whole was distinctly hostile to the Arab population, which will surprise no one who has read the preceding chapters of this work; but it was far less hostile than might have been expected, and there was a universal and genuine desire on the part of all officers holding responsible posts to be fair and just in their dealings with the inhabitants. At a later stage in the campaign I examined a great number of petitions addressed by Arabs to the Turkish and German authorities in Baghdad and elsewhere, and I have seen many addressed to French and Russian officials. They differed in but one respect from those addressed to British officers. In three cases out of four, the latter appealed 'to the well-known sense of justice of the British people', or stated that the petitioner made his request 'relying on the justice of the British Government'. This sense of justice is, indeed, a reality, and I found that private soldiers placed in positions of authority over Arabs in many branches of the military and civil administration possessed it in no less degree than their military superiors, and were respected and trusted accordingly.

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[1] References: Robertson, Bell, Hall, Hansard, Herbert (2), Moberly, Shane Leslie, Philby.

Billeting, which was in later years to become a fruitful source of political trouble, involved an immense amount of work, often of a very trying kind, for military governors and political officers. The demands of the military authorities for further and yet further accommodation for departmental offices, hospitals for officers and men, and stores, grew apace, and were inexorable. The well-to-do suffered most: accustomed all their lives to live with their womenkind in comfortable homes, they were ejected at short notice, and bidden to shift for themselves. To the merchant and the middle classes generally, the necessity of sharing a house with several other families was as repugnant as it would be to us in this country, and the fact that rent was paid on a reasonably liberal basis was small compensation. Yet the army could scarcely be expected to live under canvas in the torrid months, or wade in seas of mud during the winter, while the local inhabitants lived in comfortable houses.

During the summer of 1916 the shortage of river transport was so acute that it was necessary to use *mahailas*, wooden vessels of moderate draught carrying from 10 to 50 tons, to transport supplies up-stream. They were towed by gangs of Arabs in the proportion of one to every ten tons of cargo. At first they were hired in the open market, but after the tide had turned against us on the Tigris it became difficult to obtain crews on any terms: many were killed by the Bani Lam, a few shot by the Turks, others held as prisoners in Kut. A convoy of some fifty *mahailas* was captured and burnt near Shaikh Saʿad after our retirement from Ctesiphon, whereupon almost every *mahaila* disappeared from the river into the safety of the marshes. It became necessary to requisition them for military service: this again involved registration, classification, and decisions as to legal ownership. All this work, involving some 2,500 craft of all kinds, was initiated by the political officers, assisted after a time by British soldiers detailed for the purpose. A system of permits had to be instituted, both to prevent oppressive seizure by harassed commanders and to act as a check on traffic with the enemy: this, too, fell on the politicals. By October 1916 the work had reached such dimensions that a special department was constituted, under a 'Controller of Native Craft', as a branch of the Inland Water Transport Directorate. The story of its subsequent development has been told elsewhere;[1] it is sufficient to note here that in January 1917 all native craft were formally requisitioned and brought under military control, the owners and crews being paid direct at standard rates, and that when Baghdad was captured there were some 2,000 native craft working under military direction, their crews totalling about 10,000 men: at this period native craft were carrying over 1,000 tons of cargo a day from Basra up river.

It became clear soon after the surrender of Kut that supplies of imported foodstuffs and other necessaries were reaching the Turks from the Persian Gulf by various routes, of which the principal, in order of importance, were Basra, Kuwait, Zubair, and Ahwaz. The Civil Administration was charged with the duty of organizing a Land Blockade. 'Blockade officers' were appointed to the places mentioned, and to other points such as Nasiriya and ʿAmara, to act under the orders of the local political officers. It was their duty to issue passes for the purchase and conveyance of foodstuffs of every kind by river or land from one centre to another, in quantities restricted to reasonable local requirements. To ascertain these was a matter of great difficulty. Pre-war statistics of consumption, had they existed, would have afforded little guidance, for the insatiable demand for labour by military departments and the liberal rates of pay had increased beyond calculation the amount of money in circulation, with the result that imports increased to an extent scarcely imagined possible by the staid merchants of Sindbad's city. Almost every ship reaching Basra brought goods for the civil population of the Occupied Territories. The Basra wilayat imported in 1916 goods of greater value than had been imported in 1912 for the needs of the three wilayats of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. Imports into the neutral territories of Kuwait and Bahrain from India increased with a rapidity comparable with the imports of Scandinavia, Denmark, and Holland from the United Kingdom during the same period.[1] Thanks in large measure to the fact that Sir Percy Cox was Political Resident in the Persian Gulf and British Consul-General in South Persia, as well as Chief Political Officer with the Expeditionary Force, effective restrictions were eventually imposed upon this traffic, but through the whole of 1917 and 1918 it was a source of considerable anxiety, imposing upon all concerned a vast amount of office work. As Deputy Chief Political Officer it fell to me, during 1916 and most of 1917, to evolve some general principles for the guidance of Blockade officers, to deal with the appeals of merchants against their decisions, to co-ordinate their activities and to elaborate a form of statistical record to indicate how far we were successful, and where leakage seemed probable. From various sources we obtained information as to the current prices in Baghdad and elsewhere of rice, matches, piece-goods, and the like, which enabled us to draw reliable deductions as to the amounts that reached the market, and the probable port of entry. It was a whole-time occupation for several men, but so great was the shortage of commissioned officers and competent N.C.O.'s that it was rarely possible to obtain staff for such purposes.

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[1] Hall.

The question of local supplies became urgent during the spring and summer. The Admiralty was finding it difficult to meet the demands of the Force for ocean transport, and the War Office bade us do our best, at whatever cost, to live on the country. Straw and barley for animals, wheat and dates for Indian troops, sheep and oxen, vegetables, milk, chickens, and eggs for hospitals, all were demanded in unlimited quantities. The engineers were clamouring for reeds for burning bricks, mats for temporary shelters, sand for building purposes, stone for roads. The position was very similar to that which arose in the following year at home, where it led to the institution of a system of controls, covering almost every phase of productive and mercantile activity. During 1916 every Department was in direct correspondence with the Political Office at Basra on the subject of the particular local supplies that it required. Often several Departments were outbidding each other for the same article, or even for the same consignment. Each Department had its own contractors, who scoured the country for supplies and made rings, bought and sold to each other, and made money at our expense in the way that army contractors have done since war first became an organized business. In such matters they had nothing to learn from the West. For months I wrestled incessantly with the problem. I knew where these commodities were to be obtained, how they were handled, and about what price should be paid, and I had personal knowledge of the neighbouring territories of Persia and of the Persian Gulf generally. I had friends, too, in every port, both British and Indian, Persian and Arab, and was able to widen the area of supply. We began to quarry road metal on Kharag Island in the Persian Gulf, and to ship it to Basra in native craft: sea-shells for surfacing paths and for making lime came from Khor Musa, sand and rough stone from Kuwait, gravel from Khor ʿAbdulla. In 1917 Colonel Howell, then Deputy Civil Commissioner in Basra, discovered a distinguished member of the Geological Survey of India in the person of Lieutenant Pilgrim, I.A.R.O., and directed his energies to the investigation of the possibilities of quarrying stone at Jabal Sanam, south of Zubair, with complete success.[1] A railway line was built in 1918 to the foot of the hill and thousands of tons of road metal quarried. We managed to get some bricks from Ahwaz, gypsum for mortar from Shushtar, cotton for stuffing saddles and caulking boats from Dizful. We commissioned dhows to bring poles for hutments from Zanzibar and wood for making and repairing craft from Malabar. Tangistan contributed limestone boulders, and Clarence Straits some firewood. We arranged for a supply of sheep from places as far distant as Central Arabia, Khurramabad, and Malamir: cattle came from almost every port in the Gulf, not in large numbers but sufficient to ease the situation a little. Agents were appointed in every district to purchase on commission eggs and fowls, at a fixed rate, and their subsequent distribution was centralized. Every transaction involved much correspondence: nearly all were in the first few instances experimental and conducted either direct with men I knew or through Political Agents and Consular Officers.

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[1] See Consett.

Towards the end of the year it became clear that this system, or lack of system, must give place to a more formal organization; and with the cordial concurrence of the Inspector-General of Communications, Sir George MacMunn, of whom more hereafter, I evolved with the help of Lt.-Col. Dickson, an officer attached to the Supply Head-quarters in Basra, a scheme for a Department of Local Resources which should assume responsibility for developing to the full such local sources of supply of military requirements as were within our reach. I telegraphed the scheme to Sir Percy Cox, who was up-river with the rest of the Staff of the Army Commander, adding that the I.G.C. concurred with me that the Department, if formed, should come under the Civil Administration. By an unfortunate accident the telegram was delivered not to Sir Percy but to the Deputy Quartermaster-General, and without my signature. It was passed by the Deputy Quartermaster-General, Major-Gen. Stuart Wortley, to Sir Percy Cox with a note to the effect that General Head-quarters agreed with the scheme, assumed it to be that of the Inspector General of Communications, and considered the Chief Political Officer should take it under his wing. Sir Percy, knowing nothing of the genesis of the idea, recoiled at this fresh burden on his department, and declined to father it, with the result that the Department came into being some three months later as a branch not of the Civil Administration but of the Supply Directorate of the Army. The scheme was later on actively sponsored by General Maude, who in a letter to Colonel Repington[1] dated 17th April 1917 writes: 'I have just established a new Local Resources Directorate here . . . so that we may be able to live to a certain extent on the country. A capital fellow is running it, and I look forward to great results.'

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[1] See p. 293.

In the light of after events it is to be regretted that it was not organized as part of the Civil Administration, for there is little doubt that the interests of efficiency and economy would have been better served. By the date of the Armistice there were nearly as many Local Resources Officers as Political Officers, and a good deal of friction took place, which close co-operation between the heads of the Civil Revenue Department in Baghdad and General Dickson, as he afterwards became, could not wholly allay.[2] There can, however, be no two opinions as to the utility of the Local Resources Department and the soundness of the principle, which we would have done well to adopt from the outset, that local purchases throughout occupied territory should be controlled by a special department acting in conjunction with, if not actually responsible to, the civil government, itself subject in the last resort to the control of the Commander-in-Chief on the spot.

The Military Governors of Basra, Nasiriya, and 'Amara were brought under the orders of the Chief Political Officer during 1916: they remained, however, independent of the political officers of the administrative districts until 1917; in Baghdad the Military Governor was until 1919. This system had its disadvantages: there was concurrent jurisdiction and a good deal of overlapping, which could in practice scarcely be avoided. When, however, the Military Governors had been responsible to General Head-quarters and not to the Chief Political Officer, friction had been inevitable, for their duties were mainly civil and practically the whole of the expenditure incurred by them was chargeable to civil revenues and came under the control of the civil administration. Very shortly after the Armistice the office of Military Governor was abolished, except in Baghdad, and the duties of the post divided between the Political Officer of the district and an Arab Municipal Council with a salaried Chairman, the 'Rais Baladiya'. In Basra a British officer held the post of Municipal Commissioner until 1920, on account of the large areas under the control of the military authorities.

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[1] Repington, i. 599.

[2] For some reference to the joint efforts of the Department of Local Resources and the Civil Revenue Department to encourage local production of cereals see *Mesopotamia, 1917–20.*

Much was done by the Military Governors during 1916 to improve conditions of life in the three towns, and their example was voluntarily followed by the Arab municipal authorities at smaller centres such as Suq-ash-Shuyukh, Qurna, and Qalat Salih; the initial inertia once overcome, and a sound financial system of collecting municipal revenues introduced, the townsfolk proved surprisingly amenable to and appreciative of the advantages of clean streets and organized sanitation, and there was no serious set-back when direct British administration ceased. Both ʿAmara and Nasiriya had been planned with broad streets, intersecting at right angles, on lines reminiscent of Spanish America, or of the splendid ruins of the town founded on the left bank of the Tigris, north of Samarra, by the Khalif Mʿutasim in the ninth century. Basra and its suburb ʿAshar[1] on the bank of the Shatt-al-ʿArab were not so easy to deal with: both were a tangle of streets so narrow that a transport cart could scarcely pass without crushing the pedestrian against the wall. Much property had to be acquired and demolished, and new roads constructed through the swampy date-groves which encircled both places, to make a way for Field Artillery teams and trains of bullock wagons and mule-carts.

Outside ʿAshar was a great graveyard, surmounted by a vast pile of rubbish: a new road to Maʿqil had to be made either across the graveyard or at great cost through the crowded bazar. The leading *mulla* was obdurate in his opposition to the former alternative: the owners of shops, now doing as much trade in a week as they had ever done in a year, were terrified at the latter prospect, but even they could not move the aged priest. The engineers gave me forty-eight hours to settle the matter. That night I was visited by a leading shop-keeper who suggested a solution worthy of Solomon: alter the proposed route, he said, through the bazar, by a few yards; it will involve the demolition of the priest's house, and of the property of the leading priestly family—it is only fair—and your ears will be gladdened by the unanimous voice of the priesthood, may God prolong their days, in favour of the graveyard alignment. I hastened to take his advice and was rewarded, next day, by the arrival of a priestly deputation, which assured me that provided a small local shrine near the graveyard was not touched, and could be repaired at the public expense, we might take the road over the graves without hurting their religious feelings.

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[1] Meaning 'the place where the tenth part is taken', viz. Customs House.

The Civil Gaol at Basra, which we had inherited from the Turks in an inconceivably filthy state (see p. 73), was during 1916 remodelled as far as possible, and extended. British gaolers trained in India were obtained, and the administration humanized; so cramped were the quarters that it was necessary for the health of the prisoners to set them during the day on public work of some sort, and the sight of fettered prisoners engaged in watering or repairing the road between ʿAshar and Basra under armed escort soon became so familiar as to excite little interest. It had its disadvantages: discipline was hard to maintain and the escort was expensive; moreover, the gaol soon became grossly overcrowded. No prisons were maintained elsewhere in the Basra wilayat. The Government of India objected to find accommodation for our surplus criminals. Thanks to Colonel Lane, of the Indian Medical Service, an economical solution was found by erecting in the desert a camp, surrounded by barbed wire, in which nearly all the prisoners could be interned. From this camp they could go to and from their allotted work on the railway and other embankments with little chance of escaping over the flat plain.

Over these activities, and over civil medical arrangements generally, Major Norman Scott of the Indian Medical Service presided with dignity and success from the commencement of the occupation of Basra until 1917, when he went to Baghdad; he was replaced by Dr. Forbes Borrie, who had been in practice in Basra before the war. Major Scott had been, at the outbreak of war, Residency Surgeon and Acting British Consul-General at Baghdad: he knew Arabic well, and was liked and respected by the leading notables both in Basra and Baghdad. On him had fallen the responsible and difficult task of withdrawing in R.I.M.S. *Comet* from Baghdad to Mohammerah on the outbreak of war, with such of the British colony as could be induced to accompany him. About thirty had refused to accept his advice and had paid dearly for their temerity. The men were sent to Mersina, via

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Died 19th Feb. 1919

Qaisariya[1], whence they eventually found their way out of Turkey: the ladies were detained by the Turks in comparative comfort in Baghdad, where General Maude found them in March 1917, little the worse for their trying experience. (There was some foolish talk, in 1915, of 'rescuing' them[2] by a dash to Baghdad from near Ctesiphon, which fortunately for all concerned came to nothing.)

During 1916 the Customs Department was thoroughly organized by Mr. C. R. Watkins, of the Imperial Indian Customs Service, who was lent for the purpose by the Government of India in August 1915, until which date the service was under the superintendent of the Revenue Department. He gradually collected a competent staff, and it was not long before results showed themselves in a rapidly increasing revenue. To collect money was not, however, his sole function. An efficient preventive service was essential to the maintenance of the blockade, and constant vigilance both on imports and exports was necessary to protect our interests, and those entrusted to the Belgian Director of Customs at Mohammerah across the Persian frontier, Monsieur J. Cordonnier. Smuggling across a riverain frontier is always easy; across a marsh or desert even easier, and the frontier between Mesopotamia and Persia was for three hundred miles either river, marsh, or desert. Persians, Arabs, Jews, and Christians vied with each other in devising fresh and ingenious systems of smuggling: even a small difference in the proportionate duty levied respectively at Basra and Mohammerah was turned to advantage. At first the tariff at Basra—based on the Turkish system—was eleven per cent. *ad valorem*,[3] and was higher than that in force at Mohammerah which was fixed by Treaty at a specified rate per pound of each commodity. When prices began to rise, the position was reversed, and it became worth while to consign sugar, for example, to Mohammerah, and to transfer it secretly by night across the river. Our relations with the Persian Customs authorities were always cordial, and much was done by personal visits, but it was not till 1919 that smuggling was brought within reasonable bounds. I recollect one case of a merchant who imported into Basra, where the duty was low, quantities of playing-cards obviously destined for Persia: word was sent to Mohammerah, and the owner was arrested with his precious freight a few nights later.

These mundane activities, necessary as they were to the welfare of the force and to our high purposes, are scarcely of sufficient interest to the general reader to justify further description: it is enough to record that the departmental staffs who, like David's two hundred men at Besor, 'tarried by the stuff', deserved, like them, the respect due to fighting men. Their labours were incessant, the strain on their temper and their health very great: the fabric they erected has stood the test of time and has been but little altered in the ten years that have elapsed since it was taken over by the Arab Government of ʿIraq.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 4.2.15.

[2] Townshend, p. 102.

[3] Later reduced by us to ten per cent.

In September 1915, Colonel Sir Mark Sykes had paid a brief visit to Mesopotamia, after some months in Egypt, Aden, and India spent in interviewing all and sundry, and in writing picturesque and often impassioned dispatches home; he was my guest for a few days before proceeding up-river to see Sir Percy Cox, and I retain a vivid recollection of his impetuous energy, his genius for happy, but not always accurate, generalizations, and his intense interest in everything he saw. Unlike most of his kind, he had been in no way impressed with the efficiency of British administration in India—on the contrary, he wrote:[1]

> 'It is a shock to find that Indian towns like Delhi have made obviously less progress in the last thirty years than, say, Konia or Kastamuni; this is a real blow to my ideas. . . . The Turkish Dowla is more like a Dowla and less Oriental than our show in India. Of course, India is poor, over-populated and under-staffed, but at root the secret of Turkish influence over Indian Moslems who have been to Stambul is that they have seen there something more efficient than they see at home.'

All this he told me when we met: I did not agree then, and I do not agree now, but he definitely encouraged the idea of an efficient administration, and impressed on me that in the long run we should stand or fall by our ability to 'keep the simple folk by their right: defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong-doer'. He had an intense hatred of injustice and a thoroughly English compassion for the under-dog, but he was too short a time in Mesopotamia to gather more than fragmentary impressions. He had come with his mind made up, and he set himself to discover facts in favour of his preconceived notions, rather than to survey the local situation with an impartial eye. Whatever we were doing to change the Turkish régime, or to better the lot of the Armenian, Jew, and Sabaean minorities, had his cordial approval—for the rest, we must do justice to Arab ambitions, and satisfy France! He returned to England in December 1915.

On 6th May 1916, a week after the surrender of Kut, an exchange of notes between Sir Edward Grey and the French Ambassador in London (M. Paul Cambon), created five zones in the southern part of Turkey in Asia.

(1) A 'brown' zone comprising Palestine, where an international administration was to be established.

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[1] Shane Leslie, p. 247.

(2) A British zone including Basra, Baghdad, and Khanaqin, where Great Britain was free to establish such administration or control as she might consider suitable.

(3) A French zone comprising the Syrian coast (Beirut, Antiochia, Alexandretta), Cilicia (Mersina, Adana), and the country between Cilicia and the Upper Tigris (Marash, ʿAintab, Urfa, Diarbekir). Here France enjoyed the same rights as Great Britain in zone (2).

(4) and (5) In the intermediate stretch of land, between the British and the French zones, the two Governments were ready to recognize and protect an independent Arab State or a confederation of Arab States. The territory was divided into two 'spheres of influence' in which Great Britain and France respectively had a priority in the matter of loans and enterprises and in the provision of foreign advisers and employees. The French sphere of influence comprised Damascus, Aleppo, and Mosul, and on the east joined the Persian frontier. The British sphere of influence occupied the Syrian desert, Tikrit, and the territory along the Persian frontier between the French zone and Khanaqin.

By this document (known as the Sykes-Picot agreement) the territory of Mosul was on paper detached from the wilayats of Basra and Baghdad and entrusted to France. The archives of the Imperial Russian Government show that at first Russia did not favour the appearance of France in the immediate neighbourhood of her future frontiers (see M. Sazonov's memorandum of 29th February 1916). But in a note of 26th April 1916 Russia agreed[1] to the project, on condition that the region of Kurdistan situated south of Van and Bitlis should be included in the Russian zone.[2]

The primary object of this agreement was to create a buffer state under French protection between Russian territory in the North and a British protected Mesopotamia in the south. Few diplomatic documents have been more widely criticized or more angrily assailed. It ran counter to every sound principle, and would have proved unworkable. The difficulties which the agreement sought to compose were in truth insoluble. When Russia withdrew from the war in 1917 and abandoned her idea of conquering Anatolia, the sole justification of the arrangement ceased to exist, and a fresh plan was elaborated at San Remo, of which a description will be given elsewhere. No one in Mesopotamia knew of this agreement till 1917, but Sir Mark Sykes had left us in no doubt of the views likely to prevail at home regarding the future disposal of the Basra wilayat. It was, we understood, along with Baghdad, to be a British protectorate, and the instructions that we received after the capture of Baghdad, while they modified, in no way contradicted this plan, which is indeed implicit in the 'Sykes-Picot' agreement. At about this time references were frequently made in Parliament to the desirability of making Mesopotamia an Indian colony. 'I look on Mesopotamia', said one M.P. on 22nd March 1916, 'as the prize for which the Indian Army . . . is fighting. I hope to see a Mesopotamia in future with its irrigation works and canals all in working order under the British Government. I hope to see the banks along its rivers populated and cultivated by flourishing Indian colonies transported from the banks of the Indus.' No word was uttered by the Government of the day to discourage such utterances.[1]

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[1] See Sazonov, p. 260.

[2] Its limits were defined as follows: 'the region between Mush, Sairt, the Tigris, Jazirat-ibn-ʿOmar, and the line of peaks commanding over ʿAmadia and Margavar'—see Minorsky.

As already mentioned, Captain (afterwards Colonel) Aubrey Herbert, M.P., came to Mesopotamia under War Office auspices in April 1916. He was half-poet, half-politician, and as pro-Turkish at heart as Mark Sykes was the reverse; a better linguist than Mark Sykes but less strong physically. He knew Albania well, and had seen much of the old Turkish Empire from the Yemen to ʿOqair on the Persian Gulf and from Salonika to Angora: he was nearly blind, and not in good health, yet with it all he was blessed with a wealth of humour which lubricated any discussion. I admired him as much as I disliked the policy, of which he allowed himself to be the instrument, of offering Khalil Pasha money for the freedom of the garrison of Kut. Differing from Sir Mark Sykes, he was convinced that the Turks would in the end return to ʿIraq and that Arabs were incapable of standing alone, and he impressed on me in conversation that it would be wrong to try to commit Arabs too deeply to our side, lest they should later on incur Turkish vengeance. At this period, however, the town-Arab had reached the same conclusion. Only a few tribal chiefs were at all disposed to co-operate with us, and then only so long as it suited them, and they were within reach of our guns. Aubrey Herbert expressed other views, however, in later years: in the House of Commons,[2] in August 1920, he urged that 'there ought to be no fetters on the autonomy of the Arabs', and that we should withdraw our troops, as there was, 'as far as he knew, no one *at present*[3] who is going to attack these people'.

He retained to the last his belief in Turkey and the Turks. His

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[1] On this subject see C. F. Andrews, 'India's Emigration Problem', *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1930.

[2] Debates, H.C. 23.8.1920.

[3] The italics are mine.

His Excellency Shaikh Sir KHAZ'AL IBN HAJI JABIR KHAN
Shaikh of Mohammerah and Dependencies

sentimental description of a meeting with Tala'at Pasha in Germany[1] may be compared with Mr. Morgenthau's contemporary record of that statesman's conversation and attitude. In June 1923, Herbert even declared that 'Turkey has already realized that loyalty amongst the native Christian populations is an asset to her and essential to her welfare'! Yet England has no greater asset abroad than men such as Herbert, who cherish ancient loyalties and old friendships to the exclusion of fresh griefs: with his death, in September 1923, there passed from amongst us a chivalrous soul and a true ambassador of good will and understanding between Western and Eastern peoples.

In May came Captain George (now Lord) Lloyd, M.P., on liaison duty from Egypt; he joined Sir Percy Cox's staff at Basra and remained with us for a little over two months. Like Sykes and Herbert, he had been in close touch with affairs in Egypt, had travelled with Picot, and knew probably as much as any one of the hopes and fears that flowed fitfully through the chanceries of the Allies and the closets of Downing Street. Unlike Sykes and Herbert, however, he approached the local problems of Mesopotamia without bias, and with no desire whatever to offer dogmatic opinions without close study. He brought with him, to quote Gertrude Bell, 'an atmosphere of sanity', and a remarkable head for figures and for the commercial side of affairs, into which we were beginning to probe. He prepared on such topics several very useful memoranda, one of which[2] resulted in the dispatch by the Government of India of a Commercial Mission to Mesopotamia. To this type of work he was no stranger, for he had visited Mesopotamia in 1907 on behalf of the Board of Trade to prepare a report on probable commercial developments from the new orientation of German policy. This report,[3] which was, and I believe still is, treated as a confidential document, long remained a classic in the small circle of government officials concerned with such matters. I acquired from him a broader outlook than I had hitherto possessed. Politics, however, were not, at this period, within my purview: the work of the office was so heavy and the necessity for speed so great, if events were not to overtake us, that I devoted myself wholly to routine, in which Sir Percy Cox left me a free hand, and seldom discussed political matters with him except incidentally.

Nevertheless, I look back on this period as a very happy one: though I was little occupied in great matters, I was in complete harmony with my chief. 'I know well', wrote Francis Bacon in 1620, 'that in this doubting world *cor unum et via una* is rare in one man, but more rare

[1] *Ben Kendim*, p. 307; see also D'Abernon, vol. i, for a useful note on the subject.

[2] *Economic Situation in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamian Markets*, Basra, 1916.

[3] *Report upon the Conditions and Prospects of British Trade in Mesopotamia*, 1908.

between two.' I think that the Latin tag applied to us both individually and together.

Though I had during 1916 no lot or part in the fighting on the Tigris, I managed to keep in fairly close touch with regimental officers of about my own age and seniority in all branches of the service. The Political Mess at Basra became a hostel, not only for members of the civil administration but for all sorts and conditions of men, who knew that they were sure of a welcome, a meal, and, if need be, a bed. In this way I was able to make the acquaintance, in a mutually congenial atmosphere, of hundreds of men, with practical experience in every walk of life, and with a knowledge, often intimate, of almost every country and climate on the face of the globe. Sir Percy was for more than half the year with General Head-quarters up the Tigris, and whilst retaining a very effective supervision he delegated responsibility to Mr. Dobbs and to myself in our respective spheres. From the hundreds of officers with whom I came in contact in Basra I was able in process of time to select, as the need arose, men with the special qualifications needed for particular posts. The process of recruitment was slow and difficult; the ideal person from my point of view was often considered indispensable by his military superiors, and even more frequently felt bound to remain with his unit so long as active operations were in progress. There were, however, a certain number of 'misfits', especially in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers and the Territorial Battalions, of which I was able to make good use. The Government of India had shown little imagination in the allocation of officers. Tea planters, accustomed to handle labour in Assam, were doing duty with frontier regiments, whilst Labour Corps were being mismanaged by expert accountants. Irrigation officers and P.W.D. engineers were occupying subordinate positions in the Supply Services, whilst young Indian Civilians were acting as Embarkation Officers and trying to learn how to load ocean-going steamers. During 1916 and 1917 much was done to find the right men for the innumerable quasi-technical posts that needed filling. With the assistance of Sir George MacMunn (who as Inspector-General of Communications was a tower of strength to the Civil Administration as well as to the Army) and of Brig.-Gen. W. N. Campbell (the Deputy Adjutant-General in charge of that complicated organism, the Third Echelon[1]), General Head-quarters held the scales fairly between our needs and those of the military departments. There was a constant interchange of information and views as to the capacity and suitability of individual officers, some of whom would have been surprised to see the wealth of detail on their index cards regarding their past record and present doings.

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[1] This curious gallicism was used for the first time during the Great War to denote the organization at the Base which kept the detailed records of all units in the field.

The great variety of work entrusted to the civil administration as the campaign progressed made it necessary to utilize men of very different calibres and of all ages. Not all our geese were swans, and not all were equally fitted for the work they had to do, but with a total at the end of 1917 of over a hundred officers on our list, and in 1920 of over four hundred, it was our practice to man the more sheltered posts with the less fit, and to select men of proved worth to grapple with the sterner problems that had to be faced. The political officers carried cheerfully the load they had to bear, but they were seldom unconscious of it, and it often galled them. Long periods of loneliness tried some, especially those who had never been alone in their lives before. Some found relief in sending long telegrams and letters, others in forming friendships with the Shaikhs amongst whom their lot was cast, going out shooting and hawking with them, studying their customs and their laws, and communicating these researches in memoranda which found a ready welcome at Headquarters, where every scrap of first-hand information was turned to good account in the first place by Miss Gertrude Bell, and at an earlier stage by Mr. Dobbs, who was systematically collecting data for Revenue and other purposes.

I came in contact, too, with many officers of British and Indian Infantry regiments, the majority of whom were not destined to survive the campaign: a few I came to know really well. Outwardly they made light of their experiences, veiling their sentiments in conventional phrases; what weighed upon them most was their responsibility for the lives of their men. The 'regular' officers of the Indian Army in particular loved their men, and thought of little else; knowing each one by name and by tribe and locality, every individual casualty they felt as a personal blow. British Army officers could console themselves with the thought of the arrival of fresh drafts, whom they would soon get to know—*primo avulso non deficit alter, aureus*; but the Indian Army officers knew that it would take them longer to get to know the new arrivals and to gain their confidence. Men coming from remote villages unvisited by an Englishman for years together, speaking a dialect scarcely comprehensible even to the Indian officers, were not easily assimilable; and when casualties were heavy the survivors were not always able rapidly to propagate amongst the new arrivals that most precious of assets, regimental *esprit de corps*.

In March arrived Miss Gertrude Bell, on what was originally intended to be a flying visit from India on her way back to Cairo, where she had been attached to the Intelligence Branch. It was her destiny from the moment of her arrival, until her death in Baghdad ten years later, to devote the whole of her extraordinary talents and unbounded energies to the service of successive administrations in Mesopotamia. It was not long before it became clear to her, and to General Head-quarters, Basra, that her peculiar talents could be used to greater advantage as a member of Sir Percy Cox's staff, and in July she was formally attached to the Political Department. For some months I saw little of her: she worked for the most part at General Head-quarters, whence she made occasional visits to Sir Percy Cox to discuss Arab affairs.

Her first care was to synthetize and systematize the mass of detail regarding Arab personalities and tribes that poured into Civil Administrative Head-quarters from every part of ʿIraq. With unwearying diligence she indexed and cross-indexed, collated and checked, wherever possible by personal interview, every scrap of available information, making the dry bones live by virtue of her enthusiasm and the charm of her literary style. Her 'office-notes' were vivid, accurate, and withal feminine. Her sympathy with the victims of military exigencies was tempered by common sense; her righteous wrath was mingled with a sense of humour which never deserted her. It was in these years that she laid the foundations of the influence in high counsels which she deservedly acquired later.

The weary months, and indeed years, of temporizing and of expensive improvisations which elapsed before his Majesty's Government found itself able to make up its mind and to enforce compliance with its wishes from a reluctant War Office were as repellent to her as they were irksome to us, but she loyally accepted them as inevitable; I cherish gratefully the remembrance of her indomitable cheerfulness, in sickness and in health, after the war when the work of years and the hopes of her Arab friends seemed likely to be swept away in the destructive confusion of religious and racial excitement. The younger generation of civil administrators who came under her influence will recall gratefully her readiness to help, and her willingness to listen and learn, as well as teach, for she was big-minded enough to modify her views in the light of experience. The elder will remember, not less affectionately, her facile pen, her fund of accurate knowledge, and the human sympathy that informed her daily life.

Her last published work on Mesopotamia was her contribution to the additional volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (12th edition), but she will be better known, amongst experts, as the author of the *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia*, published officially as a Blue Book in 1920. In this the public were for the first time given a glimpse of the herculean efforts made during and after the

Armistice to weld together the divergent elements of the three provinces into a homogeneous state—efforts the success of which made possible subsequent political development. It is, however, by her *Letters*, published in 1927, which have been very widely read and deservedly admired, that she is best known to the general public.

She scorned publicity, and disliked the numerous journalistic tributes to her influence and skill: creative achievement, literary, cultural, and political, meant everything to her. She lived to see her immediate hopes for the political future of ʿIraq on the road to fruition.

Whether it was amongst her people in England, or in the gardens of Tehran that she loved so well,[1] or in the austere wilderness of Central Arabia, that the angel of Isaiah's dream first touched her lips with a live coal from off the altar, I know not. This I believe, that she was truly inspired to serve the countries alike of her birth and her adoption, with abilities and enthusiasms as rare as they were precious.

Beyond the limits of the Basra wilayat and in Najd and in Persia, the course of events during 1916 was less affected by the varying fortunes of the belligerents in Mesopotamia than might have been expected. The gloomy prophecies current in India and at home that the fall of Kut would create serious disquiet, if nothing worse, in the Islamic world were unfulfilled, like similar prophecies after the final evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula. Sir William Robertson cogently remarks that 'prestige . . . in war is apt to become a bogy, and to scare away the timid from doing what is clearly the right thing to do, or, what may prove to be worse, frighten them into a dissipation of strength in the vain endeavour to be sage everywhere at the same time. Years ago . . . unimpaired prestige may have been a necessity, but at the present day eastern peoples are fairly shrewd judges of a situation, and may be trusted to appreciate a set-back at something like its proper value.'

This is precisely what happened in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf and, to a lesser extent, in Persia. Public opinion in Basra and ʿAmara seemed almost wholly unaffected, nor was it otherwise in Eastern Arabia, where Shakespear's place had been taken by Lt.-Col. R. E. A. Hamilton (later Lord Belhaven and Stenton), who kept us in touch with the trend of events in Najd and even farther afield by a skilfully organized system of political intelligence, for which purpose Kuwait was well placed. The Shaikh of Kuwait enjoyed something of the prestige of his renowned father, and the absence of troops and of elaborate military controls induced many Arabs to visit the place who feared to enter Zubair. It was to Kuwait that Ibn Saʿud went in

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[1] Her book *Persian Pictures* contains many delightful descriptions of scenes on the Persian plateau. For a full list of her writings see *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*, 2nd edition, 1928.

November 1916 to meet, not for the first time, Sir Percy Cox, with whom he had previously concluded a Treaty (see Appendix). Shaikh Khazʿal came from Mohammerah to greet him, as did a number of the leading tribal chiefs of the Basra wilayat, and it was not difficult to induce him to continue his journey to Basra for a short visit of inspection. Of this visit Sir Percy Cox has given an all too brief account in the historical summary annexed to the second volume of Miss Bell's letters, though, somewhat surprisingly, nothing on the subject from her own vivid pen has been published. Ibn Saʿud, tall, dignified, and observant, looked as big a man as he was, and played his part to perfection, receiving salutes, inspecting naval sloops, guards of honour and docks, with the intelligent nonchalance of a practised monarch, and creating a great impression both on the Arabs who came to greet him and on the British officers who accompanied him. He has since shown himself as much 'a lion in battle, a lamb in society, and an angel in council' as his militant predecessors of the eleventh century in Sicily found William of the Iron Arm.[1] His military fame has never been sullied by ingratitude or tyranny, nor has the aptitude of his followers for war blinded him to the superior claims of peace. His achievements between 1914 and 1930 give promise of being as permanent as those of his Sharifian rival were transient, and his reconciliation with King Faisal in 1930 was an act of statesmanship in keeping with the policy which he has consistently followed since he seized the reins of power.

His visit to Basra in 1916 was, in fact, an event of far-reaching importance[2] which, had our activities in Arabia been directed from Basra instead of from Egypt, might have been the occasion for a fresh orientation of policy. ʿAbdul ʿAziz ibn ʿAbdul Rahman ibn Faisal as Saʿud, to give him his full name, was no upstart monarch, depending upon British arms for his security and on British gold for his position. He had tasted the bitterness of exile in early life at Kuwait. He had recovered his father's kingdom by his personal courage in 1901, when with fifteen trusty followers he scaled the walls of Riyadh by night and seized the citadel as soon as its doors were opened at dawn. During his sojourn at Kuwait he had seen enough of the ways of Turks and had heard enough of the railway schemes of the Germans to realize that once the Baghdad railway reached the Persian Gulf his days as an autonomous chief were numbered.

Early in 1914 he descended upon Hasa, and evicted the Turkish

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[1] Gibbon, ch. lvi.

[2] General Maude's attitude towards this and other questions of policy is not unfairly represented by the somewhat scornful reference to Ibn Saʿud's visit printed on p. 251 of his *Life* (Callwell).

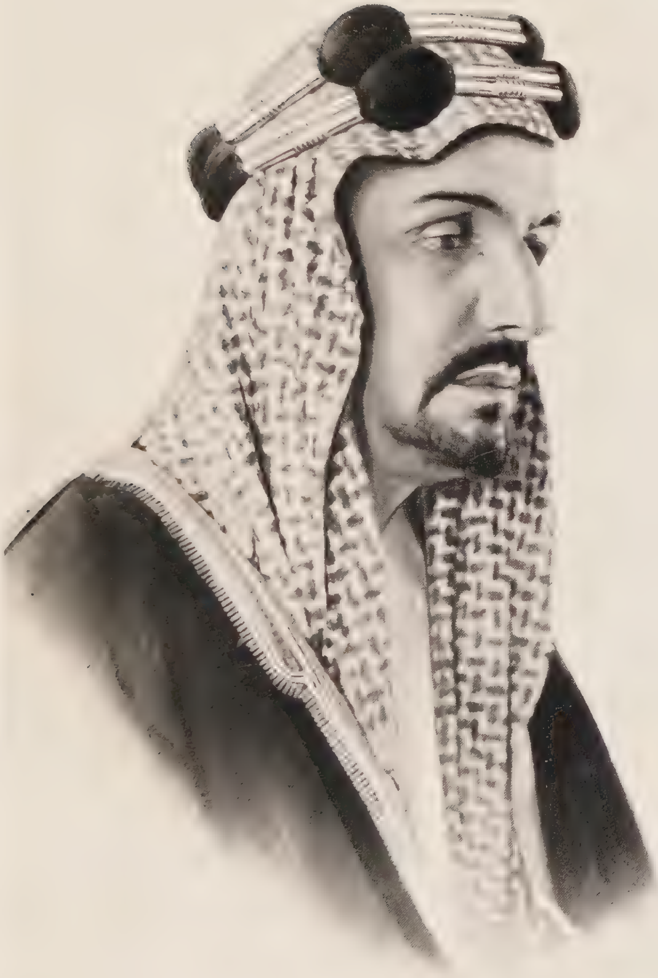

Photo by permission of the Minister of Court, 1929

HIS MAJESTY ʿABDUL ʿAZIZ IBN ʿABDUR RAHMAN
IBN FAISAL AL SAʿUD
King of Hijaz, Najd, and Dependencies

garrisons: before they could devise means of avenging themselves, the Indian Expeditionary Force had reached Basra. Sir Percy Cox, as already stated in Chapter II, lost no time in sending Captain Shakesspear to encourage Ibn Saʿud to aid our movement on and occupation of Basra by supporting our left flank. He found him mobilized for an attack on his rival Ibn Rashid and on the point of giving battle. Unfortunately the collision was a stalemate and Ibn Saʿud recoiled from the contest severely crippled. Shakespear was killed and not replaced. But for this tragic accident, to quote Philby (i. xxi), 'Colonel Lawrence might never have had the opportunity of initiating and carrying through the brilliant campaigns with which his name is associated'. The world would have been deprived of an epic, and the British Treasury would have been saved many millions of pounds sterling; the Sharifian family might never have emerged from the obscurity of the Hejaz and the arms of the Turks, with whom, until April 1916, they were in active negotiation[1]; Palestine might have remained Turkish and Zionism a dream. In the event, however, it was left to the military authorities in Egypt to accomplish what, with better luck and more imagination, especially on the part of the Government of India, might have been accomplished with our assistance by Ibn Saʿud. The vicissitudes of Arabian politics are, however, beyond the scope of this work, and the reader is referred for a fuller account of the part played in these eventful years by Ibn Saʿud to Mr. Philby's comprehensive and lucid narratives, supplemented, in somewhat lighter vein, by Major Cheesman's fascinating account of his travels in search of zoological specimens.

Some mention, too, must be made of Persia, which German enterprise had transformed into a sort of neutral battle-field. Towards the end of 1915 a force of some 8,000 irregulars and 3,000 revolted gendarmes had been collected at Hamadan by German officers, and furnished with rifles and machine-guns and ample ammunition.[2] A force of 11,000 Russians under General Baratoff moved against Hamadan, which was occupied on 15th December. After much delay, due in part to the weather and in part to Turkish opposition, General Baratoff occupied Karind on 12th March. It seemed possible that the Turks might have to divert a considerable force to oppose him. This they were able to avoid doing until after the fall of Kut, and it was not until 1st June that General Baratoff felt strong enough to attack the Turkish position at Khanaqin. It had been heavily reinforced and he was forced to retire to Karind, where for some time he halted, retaining, however, his hold on Rowandiz. But meanwhile a patrol of about a hundred Cossacks unexpectedly reached ʿAli Gharbi from Kirmanshah, a 200-mile march through sparsely inhabited mountains.

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[1] Djemal Pasha, p. 213.

[2] Debates, H.C. 15.12.15.

They only had ten pack-horses with them and lived on the country, paying for what they needed. It was a fine feat—of a kind for which unfortunately our own cavalry never showed the smallest aptitude until the long campaign had almost reached its conclusion. They returned in safety to their main body by the same route a month later, their officers having been decorated by Sir Percy Lake with the Military Cross. It fell to the Political Office to entertain them on the evening following their arrival, and we did justice to the occasion. No less than five officers speaking Russian reasonably well, including one of high rank, General Offley-Shore,[1] were discovered in Basra: Konoff, a gentle-mannered little Russian merchant, produced some excellent vodka and devised a purely Russian menu, the cooking of which he supervised in person. From Captain Noel, himself a Russian scholar, we borrowed a collection of gramophone records of Cossack music, and our guests were ushered in, to their amazement and delight, to the strains of their own regimental march. We laid ourselves out to provide them and their men with all they needed, but it was no easy task: they arrived wearing their winter costumes of heavy serge and sheepskin caps, which they were loath to abandon for sun-helmets, and it needed the tactful assistance of a large detachment of military police to keep them from getting into trouble in the ʿAshar bazar, but they were gallant men and we grudged them nothing they wanted.

No attempt has been made, so far as I am aware, to discuss or elucidate the interaction of the British and Russian forces on this front, nor is the subject germane to this work [illegible] is, however, pertinent to draw attention to the failure of the Russians to time their advance on Khanaqin to correspond with the exigencies of our operations on the Tigris. Baratoff was at Karind on 12th March: had he made a determined attack soon after that date he might well have seized Baghdad, which we know to have been but lightly held. The Turks, moreover, were very short of cavalry. In point of fact, Russian activities on this front did us in the long run more harm than good. Their policy in Persia was to live on the country, seldom paying for anything; the men were often out of hand, particularly towards the end of 1916, and outrages were frequent. Wherever Russian troops had been we found the inhabitants impoverished and hostile. The people of Khanaqin, in particular, suffered terribly at their hands in 1916 and again in 1917, but their plight was less miserable than that of the Persian villagers between Qasvin and Qasr-i-Shirin. Plundered of every scrap of food they possessed, deprived of their plough cattle, flocks, and transport animals, they died of famine by thousands, in spite of the efforts we made to succour them in the months succeed-

[1] He died in October 1922.

ing the Armistice. A fuller description of this aspect of our post-Armistice proceedings will be found elsewhere. It is sufficient to say here that much, if not all, of the xenophobia prevalent in Persia in the years succeeding the Great War was due to the appalling inhumanity with which Persians were treated alike by Turks, Germans, and Russians. Of the behaviour of our troops we received few complaints and those usually trivial. Again and again scenes were enacted such as those described by Sir Mark Sykes in reference to our occupation of Kut in 1915.

> 'Our men . . . reached the town soon after the Turks had gone. The last week the Turkish Commander has been maintaining his prestige by daily hangings. Enter the victors. Within an hour the women were chaffering milk and dates, the merchants offering contracts. Arab cultivators were dropping in to complain of a certain horseman who had ridden through a crop of beans. In lieu of the *furor teutonicus* a kind of *juris obsessio*.'

This attitude of mind was not peculiar to the Arabs and Persians over whose territories the tide of war was flowing: contemporary records show that it was shared by the natives of German East and South-West Africa, of Togoland, and of Syria and Palestine, to mention only a few of the countries which changed hands in the course of the campaign. It was a tribute to what is perhaps the best-known characteristic of the average Englishman—a love of justice, which was well exemplified by a conversation overheard and recorded by Captain Noel on the Khanaqin-Kirmanshah road in 1918, at a moment when fortune seemed to frown on us in every principal theatre of war. 'If the Turks lose', said one pilgrim, 'courage will disappear from the world; if the Germans lose, science; if the English lose there will be no more justice on earth.' 'If that be true', said another, 'the English will win, for God will not permit justice to disappear from the world.'

The year 1916 was marked in Persia by no decisive success on either side. By the end of 1915 ten out of seventeen branches of the Imperial Bank of Persia had fallen into enemy hands, and specie to the value of some £100,000 lost; Kirmanshah, Hamadan, Sultanabad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Yezd, and Kirman were all under German influence; our Consuls had been expelled, and such British subjects as had not been captured compelled to leave. In Northern Persia, on the other hand, the position of the Allies was stronger, thanks to the activities of Russian troops, though these were arousing by their conduct, as already stated, feelings of resentment which from a political point of view counterbalanced the military advantages that we derived from their presence. The position of the British Minister, Sir Charles Marling, who had been in charge since 17th April 1915, was unenviable.

Sir Percy Sykes, whom the Government of India, with astounding lack of prescience, had contemplated sending to Muscat during 1915, landed at Bandar ʿAbbas in the Persian Gulf in March 1916 as the head of a mission charged with the duty of 'raising a Persian force, 11,000 strong, to take the place of the gendarmerie, the greater part of which had, under the influence of its Swedish officers, joined the enemy for all practical purposes, or had dispersed owing to lack of pay. The object of force was to restore law and order in the interests of the Persian and British Governments. A Cossack Brigade of similar size was to be raised in the North. Both forces were to be maintained for the duration of the War by Great Britain and Russia respectively.'[1] Sir Percy Sykes has given, in his history of Persia and elsewhere, a full description of the vicissitudes and eventual success of his Mission. It arrived none too soon: apart from the successes to the credit of German agents in the inland towns already referred to, there had been grave incidents in the Persian ports. German agents had procured the murder at Lingeh of the British Consular Agent and his two brothers, two of the little guard of Indian Infantry being killed and four wounded. The Indo-European Telegraph station at Charbar had been attacked and the land line between Jask and Charbar was constantly being cut. The Bushire-Tehran line was, of course, in enemy hands, and but for the enterprise of the Indo-European Telegraph Department—under the guidance of Sir Rayner Barker of the India Office—Russia would have been completely cut off from telegraphic communication with her allies except through China.

The two routes available between Karachi and Tehran, Bushire and Kirman, were supplemented by a third, via Mashhad and Sistan, by completing the line between Sistan and Hurmak, which was completed with the approval of the Persian Government in October 1914.[2] It was invaluable, for within six months both the other routes were in enemy hands.

The position at Lingeh was stabilized by the Qawam-ul-Mulk of Shiraz, the titular chief of the Khamseh Arabs of Fars; having obtained from Basra two captured Turkish guns with a few Indian gunners from a mountain battery, and some rifles and ammunition from Sir Percy Sykes, he defeated the gendarmes, restored the authority of the Persian Government at Lar, and marched on Shiraz. He was accidentally killed by a fall from his horse on the way, but his son, the present holder of the title and a man of much ability, entered Shiraz in state a few days later.

Sir Percy Sykes, with his mixed force of British and Indian troops and locally enlisted men, occupied Kirman in June, Yezd in August, Isfahan in September, and Shiraz in October, thus completing one thousand miles in Persia. Kazerun was occupied in December and the roads to Bushire and Ahwaz opened. Thus by the end of 1916 the flanks of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force in Persia and Arabia were no longer a source of serious anxiety. Sykes had done wonders with the material at his disposal: he had in the early stages of his campaign been starved both of men and material, but when in the following year he came under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief in India instead of the Foreign Department, there was a rapid improvement;[1] this does not mean that the Foreign Department of the Government of India was neglectful of its duties, but merely that the Army Department was, as often happens in India and elsewhere, prepared to assist its own protégés, but not those of other departments.

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[1] Sykes, ii. 452.

[2] Simpson.

So long as our arms were being crowned with success, the vagaries of the censorship were a source of little more than local irritation. The censors at Basra were at that time, with a few exceptions, junior military officers assisted by a locally enlisted staff: regimental correspondence was censored by regimental officers in the usual way, that of British and Indian officers was examined at the office of the Chief Censor in Basra. There was a widespread feeling that junior combatant officers could be more usefully employed in less sedentary capacities, and that the services of senior civilians who had no personal acquaintance with the writers of letters should be utilized, but such discontent as existed was not greater than in similar circumstances in other theatres of war. After the disastrous outcome of the fighting at Ctesiphon, however, the censorship became far stricter, and it soon became clear that it was being used less to prevent information reaching the enemy than to prevent the public in India and at home becoming aware of the appalling sufferings that were being endured by our troops.

The late Edmund Candler reached Basra as the 'Official Eye-Witness' on 31st December 1915: no sooner had he arrived than he was, to use his own words,

> 'judiciously gagged. Obscurity became a tradition; and the censorship seemed to exist more as a nursery of convenient assumptions than as a screen to hide our preoccupations from the Turk. Not only was . . . secrecy . . . maintained when we had a great deal to hide; it was continued when things were going exceptionally well . . . The most universally execrated institution in Mesopotamia was the censorship. An officer arriving in the country and finding this network of inhibition round him had a sense of being trapped. It was impossible to communicate freely with the outside world. Things were evidently going wrong and this fussy, meddling supervision, this constant fear of anything discreditable leaking out, did not increase one's confidence in the Higher Command.'

The censorship was used not so much to conceal facts from the enemy as to give definite impressions to people at home—and those impressions false. The 'Official Eye-Witness's' dispatches were thrice censored—in the field, at Basra, and in India—before they reached London, where they were subject to fresh examination. The expression 'friendly Arab' drew a warning that no turn of phrase should be used which implied that all Arabs were not friendly. When our wounded were murdered and the graves of our dead despoiled by Arabs, they were described as 'Kurds and others', and 'marauders in Turkish pay'. For these verbal refinements the Political Department was in no way responsible: we were never consulted. The world at large knew far more of the truth than the English and Indian newspapers were ever allowed to publish, and drew their own conclusions. The inevitable result was that whilst Allied news from the front in France was recognized the world over as better of its kind than that put out by the Central Powers, the British version of events in Mesopotamia was nowhere believed, and as a consequence rumour flourished.

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[1] Cd. 8610, p. 128.

Fama, malum quo non aliud velocius ullum:
Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo.

Though the Army Council decided in July 1917 that 'Press communiqués dealing with military operations should, wherever possible, contain mention of regiments which have particularly distinguished themselves', this was never allowed in Mesopotamia.[1] The 'Official Eye-Witness' saw suffering increased by cold, hunger, thirst, exposure, and the hopelessness of neglect. He saw men arriving at ʿAmara unfed, untended, with bed-sores, some in a dying state, their eight days old first field dressings unchanged, maggots in the wounds, gangrene, filth indescribable, abominations too revolting for print. He cabled to India and home appealing for medical 'comforts', not 'necessities', for the troops. The telegram was suppressed by the Censor, not in India nor in London, we may be sure, but at Basra. Protests were made in Parliament: 'We want to fix responsibility upon some one', said Mr. G. Lambert in the House of Commons.[2]

> 'What is the kind of information we get? I read this morning from a correspondent in Mesopotamia:
>
> > "Another boat indigenous to the Tigris is the cauldron-like guffah of Baghdad, probably the oldest vessel in the world."
>
> That is the stuff that is sent over here from there officially. We do not want to know about these archaic means of communication. We want to know how our wounded are progressing.'

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[1] When the Victoria Cross was won in France the locality was announced: when it was won by men in Mesopotamia in 1916 or 1917 the published record in *The London Gazette* omitted any references to the locality: in no other theatre of war was this folly practised.

[2] Debates, H.C. 14.3.16.

Letters to Members of Parliament were at this time and for some months afterwards censored at Basra with particular severity.[1]

The Staff at General Head-quarters at Basra were not, however, disposed to make any concessions to the mutterings of discontent that were to be heard not less plainly in Mesopotamia than at home. Both Sir John Nixon and Sir Percy Lake were obliged to spend most of their time up-river, and were not able adequately to control affairs at the Base. Abuses crept in; satirical annotations were made by Censors in the margins of private letters dealing with the intimate affairs of individuals. For some time after the medical breakdown no letters home were permitted except on the printed postcards, of which there were few or none available at the front, though the printing-press at Basra could have produced them by the million. Postal delays, too, caused much heartburning, especially among troops on the Tigris. Admirably as the Postal Services were in general conducted, the Indian postal staff lent by the Post Office in India were grievously hampered by the arrival of hundreds of new units and later, and indeed at all times, by lack of transport. Mail-bags accumulated at the Base in thousands: men who went to hospital, or to India, often received no letters for many months. The General Staff did not, I think, realize the strength of the feelings of the rank and file, especially in Territorial units, or they would have done more.[2] The climax was reached when the Army Commander found on his table one morning extracts from a series of letters written by Divisional Commanders at the front to their relations and friends occupying high office at home, and was asked to reprimand certain very senior Generals for having ventured in their private correspondence to criticize their superiors. This was the last straw, and such a storm of resentment broke out that the offence was not repeated. But there is no doubt that these abuses did much to injure the morale of the troops.[3] General Maude's own views, as recorded in a letter home, are worth giving at length:

> 'What makes us all very angry is the vigorous censorship that exists here, coming as we do from France and the Dardanelles, where the censorship was reasonably strict but not excessively so. For instance, a short time ago we were told that no reference to any operation in Mesopotamia was allowed. I wrote suggesting that this was a mistake, and that only reference to present or future operations, but not to past operations, was meant, but I have had a reply to the effect that even past operations must not be mentioned. The War Office instructions on the point are quite clear and include no such instructions. . . . It certainly seems strange that a general officer cannot be trusted to use his discretion as to what he says and does not say. . . .'[4]

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[1] Debates, H.C. 18.7.16.

[2] See Debates, H.C. 18.10.16, Sams, and Sen.

[3] Mesopotamia Commission.

[4] Callwell, p. 202.

The lesson that may legitimately be deduced from these facts is that the Censorship of a Field Force abroad should be organized independently of the military organization in the Field, under the general control of the Government of the day, and under a Minister responsible to Parliament. The adoption of this principle at home made the censorship bearable; it should have been extended to every theatre of war.

In the Persian province of ʿArabistan, adjacent to the Basra wilayat, peace reigned throughout the year. A substantial garrison was maintained at Ahwaz, with an outpost at Shush, 'Shushan the palace' of the Book of Esther. On the oil-fields no disturbances occurred; such political discussions as centred round the affairs of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Limited were in the very competent hands of Doctor M. Y. Young, whose deserved fame as a physician and surgeon was equalled by his reputation as a wise counsellor and a just and painstaking negotiator. Khalil Pasha, sitting in Baghdad, fancied himself a second Napoleon, and was making fantastic plans, based on the coming religious and political unification of all Islamic countries, to send a force through Persia to seize the oil-fields and to attack Basra, Bushire, and even India. He received, however, no encouragement from the course of events in South-Western Persia. The veteran Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh remained aloof, professing the utmost sympathy with the aims of both parties. The tribes of Luristan as a whole abode, like Dan, in their breaches, their able-bodied members finding more lucrative employment in the Persian Labour Corps at Basra than the most successful forays on their neighbours could afford. The Bakhtiari Khans did not allow their internal differences to affect the security of the oil-fields, and the activities of German and other agents with head-quarters at Isfahan were countered by Captain Noel, whose tireless energy and amazingly rapid movements made his name a household word throughout the Karun valley. Only once, in August, did it seem likely that the pro-German element among the Bakhtiari Khans would get the upper hand, and the garrison at Ahwaz was reinforced accordingly. But the threat did not materialize and peace was maintained. At Dizful sate Soane, one of the most remarkable personalities that it has been my good fortune to meet, charged with the maintenance of order and the timely suppression of enemy activities. I have given some account of his life in a preface to the second edition of a notable book published by him in 1912, entitled *Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, and Sir Percy Cox has also placed on record an appreciation of his work.[1] He was an exceptionally good linguist, and was the only man I have ever met who could successfully live amongst Persians disguised as a Persian. He had been in Persia since 1902 with the Imperial

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[1] Bell, ii. 512

Bank of Persia and with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and had in 1905 embraced the Islamic faith. He had journeyed extensively in Southern Kurdistan and had written, in 1909, an official handbook on the country, which proved extremely useful and very accurate. On the outbreak of war he was in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's service in Baghdad, and was deported by the Turks to Mersina, whence he found his way, with other Europeans, to Egypt; he at once returned to the Persian Gulf and after a brief period of work with the Intelligence Department and a spell of duty as editor of *The Basra Times* was sent to the Bakhtiari 'to locate and silence', to use an official euphemism, certain hostile emissaries. With a bodyguard of six sturdy Persian Kurds he accomplished this mission with success, and in 1916 was appointed British Vice-Consul at Dizful. Of his work in that town it is perhaps enough to say that ten years later he was still remembered by the local people, and constantly referred to in conversation; his courage, his intimate knowledge of the customs and language of the people, and his administrative abilities have left an impression that will not be effaced during this generation.

When I last visited Dizful the Persian Governor, who knew Dizful of old, told me that Soane, whom he had never met, had done in twelve months what Persian Governors had spent weary years in trying to accomplish. He had broken the power of the leaders of the factions into which the town was divided; he had ensured respect for Persian Revenue Agents; he had enforced a reasonable standard of sanitation; and he had repaired the Sasanian bridge—all without charge to the British or Persian Exchequers. He had an admirable intelligence service which penetrated to Kirmanshah and Baghdad, and was of great use to the Army. His subsequent activities at Khanaqin and in Sulaimani are dealt with elsewhere in this work.

Scarcely less remarkable was the work done by his successor Captain C. J. Edmonds, now (1930) one of the Advisers of the 'Iraq Government, who extended Soane's system (but not his methods) to Shushtar and contrived for some time to open and maintain for commercial traffic the road from Dizful to Burujird. This was, at the time, of the utmost importance, for the Khanaqin-Kirmanshah road was congested with military traffic and Central Persia was desperately in need of imports, the lack of which at times made money almost valueless. Edmonds was succeeded by another exceptionally competent officer in the person of Captain Greenhouse. Thanks to them, the condition of South-West Persia was at no time after April 1915 a source of serious anxiety to us.

CHAPTER XI[1]

THE MESOPOTAMIA COMMISSION

> It is not to be imagined how much of service is lost from spirits full of activity, and full of energy, who are pressing, who are rushing forward, to great and capital objects when you oblige them to be continually looking back. Whilst they are defending one service they defraud you of a hundred. Applaud us when we run; console us when we fall; cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on—for God's sake let us pass on.'
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> BURKE, Bristol, 1780 (*Works*, i, p. 257).

The Vincent-Bingley Commission. Appointment of Mesopotamia Commission. Findings of Commission. Conduct of Medical Officers. Minority report. Mr. Austen Chamberlain's resignation. Mr. Balfour's defence of Lord Hardinge. Captain Aubrey Herbert's views. Historical parallels—Walcheren—Crimea—the Peninsular War.

THE Government of India, Army Head-quarters in India, and, in a scarcely less degree, the General Staff in Mesopotamia, retained to the last possible moment the ostrich complex, and all their endeavours and those of the military censorship availed little against the storm of indignation that arose at home when the bitter truth slowly became known. The transference of responsibility for the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia from the Government of India to the Home Government was no sooner proposed in February by Sir William Robertson,[2] then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, than it was accepted by the War Cabinet, with the ready concurrence of the Government of India and of the India Office. The Government of India endeavoured to forestall criticism in some measure by appointing at the invitation of the Secretary of State[3] in March 1916 a 'Commission' consisting of a very distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service, Sir William Vincent, and a General Officer with long administrative experience at Army Head-quarters in India, Maj.-Gen. Bingley, both nominated by the Commander-in-Chief in India, 'to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia during and subsequent to January, 1916, and to report the conclusions arrived at to the Chief of the General Staff'.

After the Commissioners had been at work for some weeks in Mesopotamia and had examined many important witnesses, the Secretary of State for India, realizing that a domestic inquiry of such limited scope was unlikely to carry any weight at home, instructed the Government of India to enlarge the scope of the inquiry. Mr. E. A. Ridsdale (later Sir Aurelian Ridsdale[4]), a Red Cross Commissioner, was invited by the Viceroy to join the 'Commission'; and its terms of reference were widened so as to include the arrangements made for the collection, treatment, and removal of the sick and wounded from the outset of the campaign. It retained, however, its domestic character, though it was instructed to report to the Secretary of the Army Department instead of to the Chief of the General Staff. The report of the Commissioners, an able and comprehensive document, was in the hands of the Government of India by the end of June, but was not at once published.[1] Events had meanwhile marched rapidly at home. Public opinion had been very deeply moved by our lack of success, attended with great loss of life, both in the Gallipoli Peninsula and Mesopotamia, and Mr. Asquith's Government decided to follow the precedent of 1856 and to appoint Commissioners to inquire into the operations in both these theatres, including, in the latter case, 'the *origin*, *inception*, and conduct of the operations, the supply of *drafts*, *reinforcements*, *ammunition* and equipment to the troops and *fleet*, the provision for the sick and wounded, and the responsibility of those departments of Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the forces employed in that theatre of war'. (The words in italics were added as the outcome of the debate on the Bill in the House of Commons.) The decision was a courageous one, having regard to the fate that had befallen previous British governments which had consented, in time of war, to create Commissions to report upon matters affecting executive conduct; but in the then state of feeling, both within and without the House of Commons, it was the only immediately available form of inquiry which could have been used for the purpose of quieting public opinion.

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, *Official Medical History*, Robertson.

[2] Robertson, p. 259. [3] Debates, H.C. 30.5.16. [4] He died in September 1923.

The Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act, 1916, was passed accordingly in August 1916; the Commissioners appointed[2] being:

Lord George Hamilton (Chairman)
The Earl of Donoughmore
Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P.
Sir A. Williamson, Bt., M.P.
Mr. John Hodge, M.P.
Cmdr. Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.
Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge.
General Sir Neville Lyttelton.

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[1] It was eventually issued as an annex to the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, Cd. 8610.

[2] Lord Cromer was originally nominated but was unable on grounds of health to serve. Lord George Hamilton died in September 1927, Sir Cyprian Bridge in August 1924.

The Commission was a strong one, and in many respects well fitted for the task entrusted to it. Lord George Hamilton was a former Secretary of State for India; Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge was a former Director of Naval Intelligence; Commander Josiah Wedgwood, who was added to the Commission by direct vote of the House of Commons, had seen a considerable amount of fighting. General Sir Neville Lyttelton had been the first C.G.S. under the Arnold-Forster régime in 1904, and in that capacity had recorded his strong disapproval of the sweeping changes in the organization of the Army in India proposed by Lord Kitchener. He has placed on record his opinion that much of the breakdown in Mesopotamia was due to the inherent defects in Lord Kitchener's schemes, which were not only opposed by Lord Curzon but were carried through in the teeth of almost unanimous military opinion at home.[1] The only criticism that could reasonably be levelled against the selection of the Commissioners was that they included no member with judicial training or experience, and no one with any recent practical experience of military or civil administration in India. Lord George Hamilton later explained in a letter to *The Times* on 16th July 1917 that he had only undertaken the duty to avert, as he had been informed, a political crisis.

Sir Charles Monro[2] was appointed Commander-in-Chief in India, in place of Sir Beauchamp Duff, who was recalled, nominally to give evidence. The Commission examined altogether a hundred witnesses, representative of nearly every aspect of the questions into which they had to inquire, but did not examine the Quartermaster-General in India, nor any of the officers of his branch, which was directly responsible for all transport arrangements. They took evidence on oath, but did not observe the usual rules of evidence. To avoid expense and delay they did not visit Mesopotamia or India. They were not and could not be empowered to pass any final verdict on the conduct of individuals, military or civil: their primary duty was to adjudicate upon the conduct of the higher authorities. They therefore adopted the course of sending all matters which concerned officers of a lower rank than divisional commander to the War Office, which, for obvious reasons, could take no action until the Commission had reported. No single person of those who were affected by the Commission was represented by counsel: they were assured, in the terms of the Act, that if they produced documents helpful to the inquiry but possibly injurious to themselves or gave answers to questions which might tend to criminate them, no such answer should in any subsequent proceedings be evidence against them. The report, presented on 17th May 1917, was signed by all the Commissioners except Commander Josiah Wedgwood, D.S.O., who appended a separate report.

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[1] Lyttelton, pp. 275, 304.

[2] He died in December 1929.

The Findings and Conclusions of the Commissioners were briefly as follows:

1. 'The division of responsibility between the India Office and Indian Government, the former undertaking policy, and the latter the management of the expedition, was, in the circumstances, unworkable. The Secretary of State, who controlled the policy, did not have cognisance of the capacity of the expedition to carry out the policy. The Indian Government, who managed the expedition, did not accompany developments of policy with the necessary preparations, even when they themselves proposed those developments.

2. 'The scope of the objective of the expedition was never sufficiently defined in advance, so as to make each successive move part of a well-thought-out and matured plan.

3. 'The attempt in India entirely to control and regulate the wants of the expedition from Simla was an administrative mistake, and representatives of the Headquarters Staff with wide powers should from the first have been stationed at Bombay, the port of embarkation and disembarkation to and from Mesopotamia.

4. 'The Commander-in-Chief himself, or his representatives acting as liaison officers, should from time to time have visited Mesopotamia with a view to keeping the Headquarters Staff in touch with the needs of the expedition. In consequence of such want of touch, the Military Authorities at Simla did not appreciate or realize the difficulties of campaigning in Mesopotamia, and from such lack of knowledge failed to make sufficient provision for surmounting the difficulties and drawbacks.

5. The advance to Baghdad under the conditions existing in October, 1915, was an offensive movement based upon political and military miscalculations and attempted with tired and insufficient forces, and inadequate preparations.

6. 'The weightiest share of responsibility lies with Sir John Nixon, whose confident optimism was the main cause of the decision to advance. The other persons responsible were: in India, the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge), and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Beauchamp Duff); in England, the Military Secretary of the India Office (Sir Edmund Barrow), the Secretary of State for India (Mr. Austen Chamberlain), and the War Committee of the Cabinet.

7. 'The expert advisers of the Government, who were consulted, also approved the advance and are responsible for their advice, but the papers submitted to us suggest that the approval of the naval and military experts was reluctant and was perhaps partly induced by a natural desire not to disappoint the hopes of advantage to the general situation which the Government entertained. It is, however, notable that the experts unanimously anticipated no difficulty in the advance on Baghdad, but only in holding it.

8. 'The general armament and equipment were on a scale intended for an Indian frontier expedition, were not up to the standard of modern European warfare, and were quite insufficient to meet the needs of the Mesopotamia Expedition. These shortcomings were the natural result of the policy of indiscriminate retrenchment pursued for some years before the war by the Indian Government

under instructions from the Home Government, by which the Army was to be prepared and maintained for frontier and internal use.

9. '(*a*) From the first the paramount importance both of river and railway transport in Mesopotamia was insufficiently realized by the military authorities in India.

'(*b*) A deficiency of river transport existed from the time the army left tidal water and advanced up-river from Qurna. This deficiency became very serious as the lines of communication lengthened and the numbers of the force increased.

'(*c*) Up to the end of 1915 the efforts made to rectify the deficiency of river transport were wholly inadequate.

'(*d*) For want of comprehensive grasp of the transport situation and insufficiency of river steamers we find the military authorities in India are responsible. The responsibility is a grave one.

'(*e*) River hospital steamers were an urgent requirement for the proper equipment of the expedition, and were not ordered until much too late.

'(*f*) With General Sir John Nixon rests the responsibility for recommending the advances in 1915 with insufficient transport and equipment. For what ensued from shortage of steamers, General Sir John Nixon must, in such circumstances, be held to blame. . . .

'(*h*) Facilities for the discharge and handling of cargo at Basra, also provision of works for the erection and repair of river craft, were hopelessly inadequate. . . .

'(*j*) Proceedings in connexion with the filling of orders for river craft by the Director of the Royal Indian Marine in India, and the India Office in London, were far from satisfactory.

'(*k*) Looking at the facts, which from the first must have been apparent to any administrator, military or civilian, who gave a few minutes' consideration to the map and to the conditions in Mesopotamia, the want of foresight and provision for the most fundamental needs of the expedition reflects discredit upon the organizing aptitude of all the authorities concerned.

10. 'The medical provision for the Mesopotamia Campaign was from the beginning insufficient; by reason of the continuance of this insufficiency there was a lamentable breakdown in the care of the sick and wounded after the battle of Ctesiphon and after the battles in January, 1916.

11. 'The defects of medical provision caused avoidable suffering to the sick and wounded, and during the breakdown in the winter of 1915–16 this suffering was most lamentably severe.'

The Commissioners doubtless knew (*vide* paragraph 8 above) but omitted to mention, that Lord Morley, as Secretary of State for India, had specifically forbidden the Government of India to make plans, or to obtain information in connexion with the dispatch of a military expedition from India to Mesopotamia. His orders on this subject were explicit, and they were obeyed. They are hinted at in his *Recollections* (ii. 241), where he quotes from a letter to Lord Minto: '. . . In a poor country like India, Economy is as much an element of defence as guns and forts, and to concentrate your vigour and vigilance . . .

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[1] My authority for this statement is Sir George MacMunn.

upon a host of outlying matters in Tibet, Persia, the Persian Gulf, &c., which only secondarily and indirectly concern you even as garrisons, seems to me a highly injurious dispersion from the other and more important work of an Indian Government.'

The deterioration of the Indian Military machine may be said to have begun when Lt.-Gen. Sir Nicholas O'Moore Creagh[1] was appointed by the Secretary of State for War to succeed Lord Kitchener. There were three outstanding claimants at the time[2]—Sir E. Barrow, Sir B. Duff, and Sir N. O'Moore Creagh. There were strong objections to Sir E. Barrow, because of his connexion with the Kitchener-Curzon controversy, and Sir B. Duff was considered likely to be too faithful a disciple of Lord Kitchener. There remained only Sir Nicholas O'Moore Creagh, who had done good work in special circumstances at Tientsin, but was destitute of administrative capacity. He had been awarded the Victoria Cross in Afghanistan in 1879[3] and his rapid promotion was one of the numerous examples of the value of that coveted decoration as a passport to high military office. No sooner had he reached India than he made it clear that his nickname 'no more K' was, in fact, his policy. He so convinced the financial authorities of his incompetence that they refused to meet his demands for money, and they were right. They let it be generally known that whilst they would have met the demands of Lord Kitchener, they would not accept those of his successor. Outwardly the Army was not cut down, but it was not given modern equipment, because those in authority were sure that Creagh would waste the money voted.

As to the personal responsibility of individual medical officers, the Commission animadverted in most severe terms upon the conduct and competence of one very senior officer, and in terms but little less severe on two others. The work of two of these three who were in Mesopotamia convinces me that the Commission, far from being harsh, was lenient in the view it took of their conduct, and the same may be said of the shortcomings of certain other officers whose conduct came under examination. A perusal of the *Official History of the Medical Services*[4] can only confirm this conclusion.

The senior officers of the Military Medical Services were, with certain brilliant and honourable exceptions, slower than other departments to adjust their vision to war conditions. They were apt to ask, almost unconsciously, for what they thought they would get, rather than for what they wanted, and to discover reasons why it was no use asking, rather than arguments in support of their demands. For years after war broke out they fancied themselves to be subject to the salutary checks on expenditure to which they were accustomed in peace time, and accepted with fatalistic resignation conditions at which their brethren, fresh from England or from other fronts, rose in instant and successful revolt.

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[1] He died in August, 1923, Lord Morley died a month later.

[2] On this point see MacMunn, *Behind the Scenes in many Wars*, 1930, p. 79.

[3] *The London Gazette*, 17.11.1879.

[4] See Macpherson and Mitchell.

The Commission further found that:

1. 'The Home Government agreed with the Indian Government in limiting the general military preparations of India before the war in the interests of retrenchment, and provision was accordingly not made for such an expedition as that to Mesopotamia. The limitation of medical preparation and the low standard of medical treatment in the Indian Army at the outbreak of war were the natural outcome of this policy, which was pursued for many years and was in force right up to the date of the war.

2. 'To Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, as Viceroy, belongs the general responsibility attaching to his position as the head of the Indian Government, to which had been entrusted the management of the expedition, including the provision of medical services. In regard to the actual medical administration he appears to us to have shown throughout the utmost goodwill, but considering the paramount authority of his office his action was not sufficiently strenuous and peremptory.

3. 'A more severe censure must be passed upon the Commander-in-Chief, for not only did he, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, fail closely to superintend the adequacy of medical provision in Mesopotamia, but he declined for a considerable time, until ultimately forced by the superior authority of the Viceroy, to give credence to rumours which proved to be true, and failed to take the measures which a subsequent experience shows would have saved the wounded from avoidable suffering.

4. 'There has been misuse of official reticence as to medical defects and the sufferings of the sick and wounded.

5. 'It is impossible to refrain from serious censure of the Indian Government for the lack of knowledge and foresight shown in the inadequacy of their preparations and for the lack of readiness to recognise and supply deficiencies. They ought to have known, and with proper touch with the expedition they could have known, what were its wants and requirements. It is true that their military system of administration was cumbrous and inept. It was, however, within the power of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief to have established a more effective procedure and a closer touch with the expedition itself.'

The Commissioners might have added, in justice to the Government of India and to the medical authorities in India, that the gross unpreparedness for war on any scale larger than a small frontier compaign of the Army in India had long been realized. Lord Kitchener, however, when Commander-in-Chief in India, had deliberately and repeatedly refused to make financial provision for reserves of medical supplies or even for a proportion of up-to-date equipment. He preferred to devote such funds as were available to the provision of roads, barracks, and

Photo by Russell

The Right Hon. Baron HARDINGE
K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.V.O., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., I.S.O.
Viceroy of India 1910–16

munitions of war. In his dual capacity of Commander-in-Chief and Military Member he generally had the last word on such matters.

It not infrequently occurs that after a lapse of ten years Minority Reports of Royal Commissioners command more general acceptance than those of the Majority, and the Separate Report of Commander Wedgwood is a case in point.

If only by reason of its pertinent quotations from the evidence tendered to the Commission, it carries greater conviction than that of the majority. His report is too long to summarize here, but two of his conclusions deserve quotation:

> 'I cannot resist the conclusion that the above evidence points to a want of willingness to help on the part of the Indian Government—that is on the part of Lord Hardinge and Sir Beauchamp Duff. That this unwillingness affected adversely the expedition to Mesopotamia is obvious. Had they thrown themselves heart and soul into getting India to do all that was humanly possible both in men and material the whole course of the war might have been altered. That was not done even in this country at first, but the attitude of the Indian Government prevented the effort being made in the spring of 1915 as was done here, and it prevented the success of their own expedition in Mesopotamia.
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> 'Danger in India cannot account for the want of energy shown in India, for the non-mobilization of industry, for the selfish financial attitude, for the objection to building a Tigris railway (two-foot six-inches gauge) because "progress on railways in this country (India) would have to be stopped", for the reluctance to use British Territorials, for the want of touch with their own expedition, for the ignorant advice given as regards the advance on Baghdad. Nor even can it account for the medical breakdown, since surely the actual needs of an army in the field must come before the problematic needs of an army on the frontier. It would appear that, in fact, the Army Administration in India was jealous of the Army at home; they wished to retain the magnitude of their command; they felt they were neglected, "out of the picture", and they determined, perhaps unconsciously, to be obstructive.'

Long before the Report was laid on the table of the House of Commons, on 14th June, Baghdad was in our hands, but the public joy attending that event did little to dull the demand for retribution. The *Daily Mail*, true to its traditions, demanded the condign punishment of Sir John Nixon, whose praises it had so recently been singing, and meanly perverted the Report for its own purposes.[1] Kipling, moved to just wrath, published in 11th July 1917, in the *Morning Post*, a poem entitled 'Mesopotamia', which did his heart greater credit than his muse. Its reproduction in the columns of *The Basra Times* and *The Baghdad Times* was forbidden by the Censor.

A three-day debate on the Report in the House of Commons reached a very high level, and served to illuminate every important aspect of

[1] Captain Aubrey Herbert, Debates, H.C. 13.7.17.)

the question. It was made very clear by the Attorney-General (Sir F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead), who opened the debate on 12th July, that the Commission was not a judicial body and that its proceedings were not conducted on judicial lines: the Report could not therefore serve as evidence on which to decide the guilt of individuals. The British Press as a whole, and some Members of Parliament, insisted that the Government should take prompt and severe action forthwith against those individuals whose conduct was impugned, but the military officers in question were protected by statute against any such action. The allegations made against them were all offences against the Army Act, and could only be dealt with thereunder;[1] and the Government announced their willingness to constitute an appropriate tribunal for the purpose. The House of Commons on the first day of the debate appeared to favour that course:—

> 'That decision', said Mr. Austen Chamberlain, 'I do not for one moment dispute. It necessarily, however, carries with it another decision for me. It is not possible that I, who am named in the Report apart from my colleagues in matters in which I acted in common with them, and whose responsibility is sole and undivided in other matters where the Commission administers rebuke or censure, should continue as the head of that office in which my conduct has been censured, while such conduct might at any moment be called in question by the judicial tribunal to which you are going to refer these matters. Accordingly . . . my final resignation is in the hands of the Prime Minister.'

Mr. Austen Chamberlain concluded with a warm defence of Sir John Nixon, Sir Beauchamp Duff, Sir William Meyer, and Lord Hardinge, and of Sir Edmond Barrow and Sir John Biles of the India Office; he gave a full and satisfactory explanation of the procedure under which he had sent certain telegrams to India as 'private' rather than 'secret'; and in his defence of individuals he was followed, amongst others, by Sir Mark Sykes, Sir John Jardine, and Sir J. D. Rees. The medical officers whose conduct was impugned found no defenders. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs intervened to defend Lord Hardinge, whose place in India had been filled on the expiry of his term of office by Lord Chelmsford, and who had reverted to his appointment as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Lord Hardinge, though a permanent civil servant, had spoken in the House of Lords in his defence, thus creating, to the horror of pedants, a new precedent; but it was in defence of his conduct in a previous avatar that he spoke. He, too, had tendered his resignation, but it had not been accepted by Mr. Balfour,[1] who professed himself unwilling to lose his services at the Foreign Office. Mr. Balfour made it quite clear that he in no way accepted as final the Commission's verdict on the individuals concerned (except the medical officers). He referred to the

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[1] The relevant Rule of Procedure reads as follows: 'Whenever any inquiry affects the character or military reputation of an officer or soldier full opportunity must be afforded to that officer or soldier of being present throughout the inquiry and of making any statement and giving any evidence he may wish to make or give, and of cross-examining any witness whose evidence in his opinion affects his character or military reputation and of producing any witness in defence of his character or military reputation.'

'catastrophe that always happens if you advance far into a savage country where you cannot leave the wounded, when you meet with a serious reverse, to the tender mercies of men who may cut their throats so soon as they reach them.' 'It was certainly not', he said, 'Lord Hardinge's fault, broadly speaking, that India entered it unprepared, still less was it his fault that Great Britain entered it unprepared. Remember what the deliberate policy of the Indian Government was, sanctioned by this House—that the military expenditure in India should be reduced to the lowest limits compatible with Indian safety from external land attack and from internal revolutions. That was the policy. It was a deliberate policy. It was a policy sanctioned, and indeed carried out, under the inspiration of a Commission appointed from this country over which a Field-Marshal presided.[2] That Commission resolved that it was adequate for India's needs that a sum of, I think, £19,500,000 should be its military budget. Lord Hardinge never conformed to that in any year. Speaking in round figures, I believe that the average expenditure since that Commission exceeded Lord Nicholson's proposals by nearly £2,000,000. But even with that India was unprepared for what it was never asked to prepare for. It suddenly found itself appealed to by this country to come to this country's assistance in a great European war. Did India refuse? Did Lord Hardinge refuse? Did he show himself reluctant to give everything which India could contribute to the great cause for the assistance of the Home Country? India made an effort such as India never made before. India, under Lord Hardinge, risked everything in the nature of outside aggression, frontier warfare, internal dissension. India reduced her white troops at one moment to 15,000. India was bled white for war purposes before the Mesopotamia Expedition began; and then are you going to look with too critical, too microscopical an eye upon the fact that a country which had sent men, guns, officers, medical stores, and rifles was not fully equipped for dealing with the situation in Mesopotamia?'

Mr. Balfour concluded with the following prophetic words:—

'When this war is over, in a very few years you will find what I think the Commission called "an atmosphere of economy" again creeping over us, and they (the right honourable gentlemen opposite) will be equally unable to imagine that a new catastrophe will require as great efforts from them and the taxpayers they represent.'

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[1] He died on 19th March 1930.

[2] A committee, consisting of Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, Sir William Meyer, Sir Robert Scallon, and Sir Percy Lake, had recommended by the casting vote of Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, that the normal standard of net military expenditure in India should be retained at 19½ millions. The two representatives of the Army in India dissented. As a matter of fact, Lord Hardinge's Government had on the average exceeded that figure by £2,000,000 a year. It is not generally known that Sir Douglas Haig, when Chief of the General Staff in India, penned, before he left office, a very strong memorandum on the unpreparedness for modern warfare of the Army in India. No action whatever was taken thereon pending the receipt of the report of Lord Nicholson's Committee.

On the following day Captain Aubrey Herbert took part in the Debate.

'We would welcome', he said, 'any enquiry, which we hope at the very least may get rid of Sir William Meyer and Sir Beauchamp Duff. We would welcome any enquiry that would punish Surgeon-General Hathaway and Sir William Babtie, if the findings of this Commission were found to be true. We would welcome any enquiry that would restore the late Secretary of State for India to his own place, because this House knows his only fault is loyalty to his colleagues and subordinates. . . . My real point is this: All this means loss of time, and when you are having a war loss of time means loss of lives, and I will go further, and say that the whole tendency of this really is to paralyse responsibility, to diminish initiative, and if you are going to say to your generals, "If you fail in health, or ever make a mistake, you are going to be dismissed," it is not a three years' war you will have to prepare for, but a thirty years' war.

'What actually has happened? To put it in a few words, this has happened: At last the general public here have become acquainted with the terrific difficulties our men have had to encounter in Mesopotamia. They have seen the unspeakable sacrifices that have been asked of them, and the unspeakable reward that has been given to a number of those troops. The consequence has been indignation like a fire and an outcry for punishment. But we have always been a fair race. Let it be punishment, but not blind punishment. Fair play is a jewel, and I think we still keep that jewel. I believe this House would admit that the responsibility for all that has happened is a responsibility that is very widely shared. Before this War we had a policy of peace, retrenchment, and reform. All those things are very nice things, but they are of very little use when you come to fighting Germany . . . . When Sir John Nixon wins victories, that brings in halfpennies to the *Daily Mail*, and when he suffers defeat that brings in pennies to the *Daily Mail*, which during the meantime has gone up in price. Sir John Nixon returns broken in health. The *Daily Mail* assumes him guilty and calls for his punishment. I say that that is an extremely ignoble spectacle.'

After three days spent in debate, no decision was reached as to the setting up of a judicial tribunal to consider the allegations made against individuals; and on 1st August it was announced that the Army Council had called upon the military officers concerned to furnish written explanations of the statements contained in the Commissioners' Report, on receipt of which the Council would consider what further action was to be taken in each case. Nothing more was heard of the matter, and in the innumerable preoccupations that filled the minds of the Governments of Great Britain and of India the report as a whole was soon forgotten.[1]

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[1] Lt.-Gen. Sir William Babtie, V.C., K.C.M.G. (1916), submitted his explanation to the Army Council, which found it satisfactory and he was gazetted K.C.B. in 1919. He

Yet such is its importance, and so vital to the national welfare is the lesson which it sought to instil, that I am constrained to inflict upon my readers a historical digression that has a direct bearing upon the chronic unpreparedness and lack of foresight which the tragedy on the Tigris disclosed, and the Commission did no more than record.

The first occasion on which the House of Commons decided to have an inquiry into the conduct of military operations was that of the Walcheren Expedition of 1809, which was marked by a vast amount of avoidable sickness and suffering. The inquiry was conducted by the whole House, which sat without intermission from the end of January to the 17th March 1810, 'absorbing,' as the historian Alison says,[1] 'nearly the whole time, both of the Government and the country, at the very moment when the concentration of national thought and energies was required for the prosecution of the gigantic campaign in progress on the continent'.

The minutes of the inquiry[2] disclose a state of affairs not dissimilar from that on the Tigris in 1915–16.

Sir Francis Burdett, who wound up the Debate,

> 'would have had both Commanders-in-Chief brought to a Court Martial for undertaking to direct an enterprise they confessed they knew nothing about. . . . Lord Castlereagh . . . sent to the Commander-in-Chief for his opinion relative to the capture of Antwerp by a *coup de main.* Letters were then written by four different Generals, in a formal manner, none of them giving any information; but taking certain things for granted (which things were false), they supposed the enterprise to be practicable. But every one of them said it would be attended with great risk; and not one ventured to express a belief that Antwerp could be taken by a *coup de main.* It appeared, then, that the four Generals, who knew nothing of the matter, gave these opinions; and on these the Minister acted. . . . Thus in disgraceful ignorance did Ministers risk the safety of armies of the country. Then, when the Army landed in Holland, we had triumphant accounts of its progress. We heard of the capture of fishing towns, the names of which never reached us before; and at last, the whole of the force was stopped by a wet ditch at Middleburg.'

For Antwerp read Baghdad, and for Holland read Mesopotamia, and the parallel is complete!

The Walcheren Inquiry was not wholly fruitless; to quote Kinglake[3] on the subject: 'Our people, following their wont, did not formulate any clear principle, did not say in articulate words that the cause of the evil must cease; but much better than ever since the great days of

died in September 1920. (Debates, H.C. 18.10.17.) Sir John Nixon was likewise exonerated and was gazetted G.C.M.G. in 1919. He died in December 1921.

[1] Alison, *History of Europe,* Chapter LX.

[2] Grey, W., *Walcheren. Proceedings on a motion for inquiry into the conduct and policy of the late Expedition to the Scheldt.*

[3] Kinglake, A. W., *The Invasion of the Crimea,* vol. vi, p. 466.

Chatham, they contrived that the business of war should be withdrawn from the "personal" handling of the King, and carried on by the State. With that happy change the "Wellington reign" began.'

The lesson was soon forgotten.

Forty years later, when the true state of affairs in the Crimean Peninsula became known, Mr. Roebuck invoked the precedent of 1810 in demanding a Committee of Inquiry, which sat from April to July of 1856 and in the course of its proceedings asked 21,421 questions. After dealing with certain departmental matters the Committee declared in its report to Parliament that the administration which ordered the expedition, foreseeing immediate success and not foreseeing a protracted struggle, 'made no provision for a winter campaign'; 'that the expedition was planned and undertaken without sufficient care or forethought'; and, finally, 'that this conduct on the part of the administration was the first and chief cause of the calamities which befell our Army'. The Committee added these words: 'the patience and fortitude of the Army demand the admiration and gratitude of the nation, on whose behalf they have fought, bled, and suffered. Their heroic valour and equally heroic patience under sufferings and privations have given them claims upon their country which will be long remembered and gratefully acknowledged.

'Your Committee will now close their report with a hope that every British Army may in future display the great qualities which this noble Army has displayed, and that none may hereafter be exposed to such sufferings as are recorded in these pages.'[1]

That Inquiry led to the downfall of the Government, the resignation of the new Government, and the return to that Government of the Ministers who had originally resigned.

In pointing this out in the House of Commons[2] in the debate on the appointment of the Commission, Mr. Asquith[3] expressed the hope that such complications as these would not follow. What actually happened was almost precisely what he feared. His Government fell, and to the new Government there returned, before the end of the War, with a seat in the War Cabinet, the Minister (Mr. Austen Chamberlain) whose resignation was caused by the report on the Commission.

The conclusions of the Mesopotamia Inquiry are but an echo of the defects revealed by the Walcheren, Crimean, and South African Wars, an echo that plucks at the heart-strings and stirs a thousand pitiful memories, subconscious and ancestral, in the minds of military men. Nor is it to their own feelings or those of their forbears that their minds recur, nor do those of the better sort think with contumely of statesmen nor with scorn of representative institutions. Rather do they reflect that they themselves, in common with the nation of which they are a microcosm, have in the past been prone to trust to hasty improvisations and to ignore or belittle the value of expert testimony and scientific investigation. With these considerations uppermost in their minds, they welcome the greater emphasis laid to-day upon expert technical studies in time of peace, as shown by the proportionately larger scientific staff maintained in and in connexion with the Ministries charged with National Defence.

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[1] *Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Supplies for the British Army in the Crimea.* 3 vols., 717 pages, 1856.

[2] Debates, H.C. 20.7.16.

[3] He died on 15th February 1928.

This long digression cannot be better closed than by quoting the verdict of the great historian[1] of the Peninsular Campaign of 1808–14—a verdict as true to-day as when it was penned almost a century ago.

> 'And why was all this striving and blood against insurmountable difficulties? Why were men sent thus to slaughter when the application of a just science would have rendered the operation comparatively easy? Because the English Ministers, so ready to plunge into war, were quite ignorant of its exigencies; because the English people are warlike without being military, and under the pretence of maintaining a liberty which they do not possess oppose in peace all useful martial establishments. Expatiating in their schools and colleges upon Roman discipline and Roman valour they are heedless of Roman institutions; they desire like that ancient republic to be free at home and conquerors abroad, but start at perfecting their military system as a thing incompatible with a constitution which they yet suffer to be violated by every minister who trembles at the exposure of corruption. In the beginning of each war England has to seek in blood the knowledge necessary to insure success, and like the fiend's progress toward Eden her conquering course is through chaos followed by death.'

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[1] Sir W. F. P. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, ed. 1850, Book XVI, Chapter VII.

CHAPTER XII[1]

REORGANIZATION AT THE BASE AND ON THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION

'It is our gift to be able to apply ourselves in emergencies with immense energy. Our success in pulling ourselves together has often suggested to outside observers that we had long ago looked ahead, but were merely inefficient.'

LORD HALDANE in *Before the War.*

Military Policy. Sir George Buchanan. Sir George MacMunn. Sir William Willcox. General Maude succeeds General Lake. Sir William Meyer. Railway Construction. Reorganization of River Transport. River Conservancy. Dredging Schemes. Pilot Services. Mechanical Transport. Royal Flying Corps. Sir Godfrey Collins.

WHEN it became clear that the relief of Kut was impossible, the Secretary of State for War, on whom now rested responsibility for the strategic direction of our forces in Mesopotamia, decided, with the concurrence of all concerned, that General Lake's command should adopt a defensive role, in order both to assist the Russians[2] under General Baratoff and to prevent the unfavourable reactions in Persia and Afghanistan, as well as in the Basra wilayat, that might follow a withdrawal.

These instructions were contained in a telegram from Sir W. Robertson dated 30th April, which deserves quotation:

'At present our policy in Mesopotamia is defensive and we do not attach any importance to the possession of Kut or to the occupation of Baghdad. It is of course impracticable to prescribe policy for a long time ahead. Lake would probably be directed to fall back to 'Amara or even to Qurna if no other considerations were involved; but it is important to minimize and counteract the fall of Kut, and, in order to assist the Russians, to keep occupied the Turks now opposed to the Tigris Corps. For these reasons Lake should for the present maintain as forward a position as can be made secure tactically and be ready to take advantage of any weakening of the Turks on his front, so long as this can be effected without incurring heavy loss, whether caused by the enemy or by unhealthy conditions. Neither now nor at any time is he required to maintain a more forward position than he thinks he can hold with reasonable safety.'[3]

It soon became clear that the Turks on the Tigris were in no position to take the offensive, their numbers being reduced to about ten thousand: the British forces, on the other hand, were urgently in need of rest, reorganization, and supplies of all kinds. No reserves of ammunition, tentage, medical comforts or rations existed at the front, for the force had long been living from hand to mouth. Supplies at the Base were abundant, but shortage of land and river transport, the congestion of ocean transport in the Shatt-al-ʿArab, and the lack of labour made it impossible for many months to keep the troops at the front adequately equipped. Matters were further complicated by the very great amount of disease and sickness amongst all units during the summer.

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, *Official Medical History*, Hall, Leland, F.O. Handbook.

[2] There was at this time a possibility of a Russian advance on Baghdad from Karind and simultaneously from Urmia through Ruwandiz.

[3] *O.H.* iii. 3.

Sir Percy Lake had already set in motion, as mentioned in Chapter VIII, some of the machinery required to remedy these defects; he was now free to devote all his energies to the task, of the magnitude of which both the Government of India and the War Office were at last aware. At Basra much precious time had been wasted. Sir George Buchanan, an engineer with great administrative experience, had been kicking his heels at Basra since 1st January, prevented by departmental jealousies from undertaking reorganization on comprehensive lines. To quote the *Official History* (iii. 32): 'Sir George Buchanan . . . had been sent from India as Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy, but . . . his services had been mainly devoted to river conservancy work, and his duties as regards port administration had been settled locally as being merely advisory. General Lake realized that some change in the system of port administration would be necessary sooner or later, but he considered it would be inopportune to attempt it while the pressure due to the Kut relief operations was at its highest, and also before Sir George Buchanan had got his conservancy schemes into working order.' Conservancy schemes could not possibly take effective shape for many months, nor could reorganization have affected unfavourably the progress of relief measures. These were but flimsy excuses put forward officially by a section of Sir Percy Lake's staff, who resented the appointment of a civilian from India to do what they had shown themselves incompetent to attempt. Sir George Buchanan hastened back to India in April, nominally to expedite the dispatch of dredgers, but actually to make clear to the Government of India the extent of the official obstruction to which he was being subjected at Basra, and secured the dispatch of instructions from India to Sir Percy Lake insisting that on his return he was to take over responsibility for both port administration and river conservancy. The official machine, however, was too strong for him or for the Government of India; two committees were constituted in Mesopotamia to consider and report on the whole question of river fleet organization. They sat during June and July, and it was not till the beginning of

August that their reports were ready, but no action was taken on them till Lt.-Col. W. H. Grey, the officer nominated by the War Office as an adviser to the Inspector-General of Communications, arrived with an expert staff from England. Ten days later the War Office, on the ground that the system of dual control of the force which for administration purposes was still under India, was unworkable, assumed complete responsibility. Colonel Grey was instructed to take over control of the whole river transport, and did so on 7th September, thus bringing to an end an era of departmental bickering lasting eight months, which reflected little credit on those responsible.

Maj.-Gen. Grey, as he soon became, was made responsible for:

(*a*) Organization and control of inland water transport.
(*b*) Management of port traffic and port craft other than sea-going, including the discharge of ocean steamers.
(*c*) Construction of dockyards, repair and construction yards, and buoying and lighting above the ocean port.
(*d*) Control of navigation of river and river-craft pilots.

His principal assistants, both very capable men, were Major R. H. W. Hughes and Captain H. E. Ratsey.

Most of the officers of the Royal Indian Marine continued to work under his orders and proved before long to be the backbone of the Department.

Sir George Buchanan's duties as Director of Port Administration and Conservancy were:

(i) Control of the ocean port and port personnel.
(ii) Port and river engineering works and river conservancy organization, other than piers for river-craft, and
(iii) Such special engineering works as might be ordered.

Notwithstanding administrative uncertainties, great improvements had been effected during the summer months: by the end of September the available tonnage on the Tigris had been increased by 64 per cent., and by the end of the year the total increase was about 100 per cent. Several thousand Persian, Egyptian and Arab labourers had been organized on a military basis into Labour Corps, and even India had begun to supply a few Corps drawn at first mainly from the gaols.

In other directions, too, there had been a notable change for the better. Brig.-Gen. MacMunn had arrived on 15th April, at General Lake's request, to take over the appointment of Inspector-General of Communications, which had hitherto been held by a succession of general officers whose only qualification appears to have been that they were not wanted elsewhere. It was not long before Sir George MacMunn, as he soon afterwards became, effected profound changes

Photo by Russell

Lieut.-Gen. Sir GEORGE F. MacMUNN
K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

in the whole spirit of his command. He had an inspiring personality, and very great powers of organization: always infectiously cheerful, with a pleasant word for the humblest member of the force, and a very thorough knowledge of every branch of the Indian Army, on the composition of which he was well known as a high authority,[1] he was before long probably the best known and certainly the most popular man in the force. He did not commit the common error of doing the work of his staff, which was in consequence notably more efficient than that of General Head-quarters and tended to acquire increasing authority as time went on. He 'had a way with him', too, in obtaining what he required from India: the note of acrimony which was too often dominant in the endless series of demands on Simla from General Head-quarters was replaced, in his case, by clearly worded and persuasive requests, punctuated by friendly acknowledgements of the difficulties under which he knew India to be labouring, and supported by cheery private letters. He understood and was sympathetic with the civil administrative machine, and was at pains to make himself agreeable to the leading Arab personalities. No one was a more constant or welcome visitor to the hospitals, and he was tireless in his efforts to make life easier and more cheerful for nursing sisters (of whom there were over 150 in Mesopotamia during the summer of 1916), officers, and men of all units. Not one sought the assistance of the Inspector-General of Communications in vain; and when, in August 1916, General Maude assumed the chief command on this front, he gave a freer hand to his I.G.C. than to any other of his senior staff officers, and spoke and wrote warmly of his abilities.[2] He knew how to deal with Indians, Persians, and Arabs, and his influence was wholly for good.

He had a very difficult furrow to plough. The summer of 1916 was somewhat hotter than that of 1915, and the raw troops of which the force was now mainly composed suffered far more severely than did their comrades in the previous summer. The hospitals and convalescent depots at 'Amara and Basra were crowded, and of the fresh drafts as they arrived from England, debilitated by the trying journey in tropical seas, less than half reached their units; the rest went to swell the growing population of the hospitals. Every effort was made to transfer to India as many serious cases as possible, but here again climatic difficulties were considerable. On a single ship, the *Dongola*, on its way from Basra to Bombay in September, no less than 130 cases of heat-stroke occurred, of which 23 were fatal.[3] The medical authorities were exceedingly slow to realize their responsibility for ensuring that the rations issued to the troops were as good as circumstances permitted. Scurvy reappeared amongst Indian troops, and worked havoc.

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[1] His book *The Armies of India* (1909) is recognized as a *locus classicus*, and is as well worth reading to-day as when it was first published.

[2] Callwell; see also Bell, i. 378, 382.

[3] Debates, H.C. 19.10.16.

Notwithstanding the heavy casualties from scurvy and *beri-beri* (another deficiency disease) amongst Indian and British troops respectively in 1915, and despite the earnest efforts of the War Office to provide adequately for the needs of the force, it was not until the end of 1916 that scurvy was brought under control. The numbers invalided from this cause alone were over ten thousand[1]; it was alleged in Parliament,[2] and not denied, that 90 per cent. of the sick on one transport were stricken with scurvy. Now scurvy is no new disease: it is, says Kinglake, the one sure disease which always becomes the Accuser, the implacable Accuser, of those who undertake, and yet fail, to provide food such as may be fitted to sustain an army in health; its cause is always one and the same—the want of appropriate food.

> 'Les causes de l'invasion scorbutique sont, comme toujours, l'absence absolue de végétaux frais, l'usage prolongé de vivres de campagne, et surtout l'usage de la viande salée; la fatigue, pas assez de repos, pas assez de sommeil, le froid, et l'humidité.'

Thus wrote the Principal Medical Officer of the French troops in the Crimea, sixty years previously,[3] and in 1930 there is little to be added to his diagnosis. That the disease would take a heavy toll of the force in 1916 might have been and doubtless was foreseen, for it had reached serious dimensions amongst seasoned troops in 1915; but little was done to provide the troops with the necessary antidote in the form of a balanced diet until Dr. (later Sir William) Willcox, who had given up a lucrative practice in London on appointment as Consulting Physician to the Force,[4] succeeded, with the energetic assistance and support of Colonel (later Sir Matthew) Fell, D.D.M.S., in the face of much indifference and some opposition on the part of some members of the official medical hierarchy, in securing for all ranks a revised dietary. The effect was immediate; and cases traceable to vitamin deficiency hereafter were met with only amongst refugees and Turkish prisoners of war when they first came under our care. But it had taken us two years of war to learn afresh the lesson of the Crimea.

Let it not be supposed that the malady only smote those who were labelled in the hospitals as suffering therefrom: it is certain that of yet more numerous thousands laid low by other complaints, a large proportion were men whose diseases had either been caused, or else in

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[1] See Willcox. [2] Debates, H.C. 9.11.16. [3] Kinglake, vi. 182.

[4] Both Dr. Willcox and Sir V. Horsley were sent as Consultants by the War Office in January 1916, when the full tale of inefficiency and horror began to be known at home. They were empowered to communicate direct to the War Office, a salutary power which ensured, as nothing else could have done, that their representations would receive attention.

Photo by Nicholas E. Smirnoff

SIR WILLIAM H. WILLCOX
K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.P.H., F.R.C.P., F.I.C., F.C.S.

no small measure aggravated, by the presence of the scorbutic taint. Apart altogether from scurvy, the health of the force was bad. During the week ending 1st July, admissions to hospital of fighting men alone were 9,000, equivalent to 100 per cent. per month. By November the admissions fell to 10 per cent. Hospitals on a large scale had been organized at Shaikh Sa'ad and 'Amara as well as Basra, and available accommodation had risen from less than 5,000 beds in January to 18,450 in July. In addition an average of 7,000 men were sent to India every month from May to August: during the same period reinforcements averaged some 16,000 men and 2,150 animals. Of all the diseases which afflicted the troops, perhaps the most striking and certainly the most dangerous was heat-stroke. A maximum shade temperature of 110° F. appeared to be the safety limit. When this was reached some cases of 'effects of heat' were sure to occur, and each rise of a degree above this limit was attended by an increasingly large number of cases. Temperatures of 120° or over were really dangerous. The nights were relatively cool even in the hottest months; but for this, the mortality would have been far greater. Exertion during the heat of the day is a great predisposing cause of heat-stroke, and the death of Sir Victor Horsley in July 1916 was undoubtedly due to his having to walk long distances in the sun in the performance of his duties as consulting surgeon.[1] The casualties among the staff of the Medical Services from heat-stroke were, for the same reason, proportionately greater than in other departments. Young doctors, fresh from the medical schools, came out in batches throughout the hot weather; many succumbed to the climate and died or were invalided within a few months. All were overworked; few were unaffected by the constant contact with so great a volume of human misery, with which they were called on to cope with means so inadequate. Prominent amongst the senior medical officers at Basra was Colonel H. G. Melville, I.M.S., formerly a Professor of Medicine at Lahore Medical College. Though he had passed the age at which men can safely labour under conditions such as those which prevailed at Basra, and though he suffered from serious cardiac disability, he volunteered for service in Mesopotamia and was sent out by the Government of India as 'Consulting Physician'. His great knowledge of medical conditions in oriental countries, his kindly disposition, and his personal charm marked him out as the ideal guide, philosopher, and friend of newly arrived medical officers. His patience and steadfast perseverance under difficulties set a standard to younger men which was of inestimable value, while their professional zeal was stimulated by his practical experience, which was complementary to the high scientific attainments of Sir William Willcox. These two men, together with the Consulting Surgeons, Colonel Hugo, I.M.S., and Colonel T. P. Legg, A.M.S., exercised an influence upon medical practice in Mesopotamia which can scarcely be exaggerated. Colonel Melville died in harness in Baghdad of heart failure in December 1918.

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[1] See Willcox and Swayne.

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In August 1916 the War Cabinet decided to extend to Mesopotamia (but, as we were to learn in 1920, only for the duration of the war) the system which had been all too tardily adopted in other theatres of war, of appointing to high command in Mesopotamia men somewhat junior in years to those who had been almost automatically placed by the laws of seniority at the head of affairs. General Maude, who was well known to Sir William Robertson, and was nine years younger than General Lake, was appointed G.O.C. in Chief in his place, though he was junior in permanent military rank to every divisional general in Mesopotamia, and had no experience of India or of Indian troops. His place in charge of the Tigris Corps was taken by General Cobbe, who was even younger in years than General Maude and also junior to the other divisional commanders.

Between General Maude and Sir Percy Lake there had long been a bond of sympathy, which was strengthened by four days of consultation between the two men before Sir Percy Lake sailed for Bombay. 'I am more sorry than I can say for him', wrote the ever-generous Maude in a private letter, 'and have a great admiration for him; for he has battled splendidly against ill-health practically all through his time here.'

The year 1916 saw the beginning of railway construction, a branch of military activity which was destined to expand very rapidly and to exercise an important influence on post-war developments. Before dealing with the actual programme of construction as finally sanctioned, it is necessary to refer briefly to the controversies which had centred round the question of railway construction during the previous year.

General Barrett had suggested, on 28th February 1915, a light railway to Nasiriya. 'Once constructed', he said, 'it would not only solve our supply difficulty, but would also tend towards pacifying the country.' The Government of India took no action on this request at the time, but later on asked Sir John Nixon whether he wanted 137 miles of light railway available in India. Sir John Nixon replied that he did not want the railway material in question (it was said to be of indifferent quality and dated from the Delhi Durbar of 1911), but he did want a railway to Nasiriya, and on 14th August pressed his demands alike on military, political, and commercial grounds. Three months later the Government of India replied that they had decided

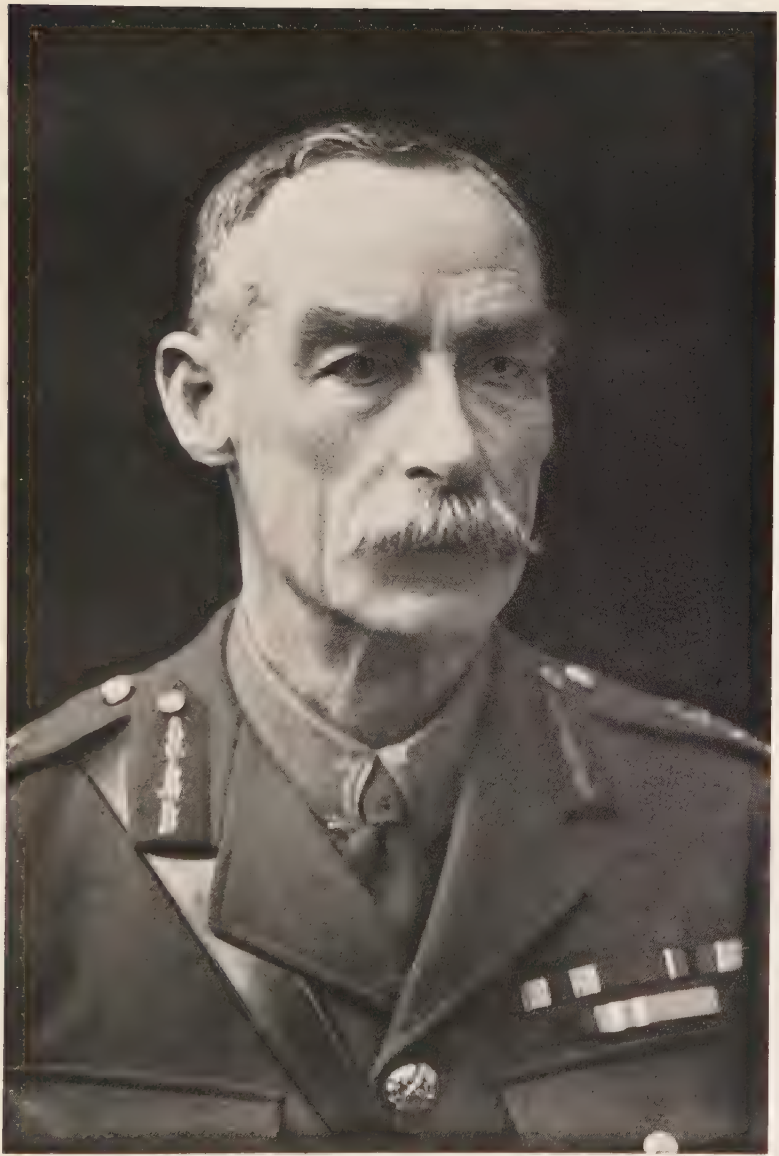

Photo by Russell

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR PERCY H. N. LAKE
K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
Indian Army

'not to proceed for the present with the construction on the ground of expense'.

For this decision the Finance Member, Sir William Meyer, has been widely and unjustly criticized. It must be admitted that the political and commercial arguments in favour of the line were weak, that subsquent experience showed that such supplies of grain and fodder as were obtainable at Nasiriya would reach Basra, as they do to-day, by river more cheaply and quickly than by rail, that the prospects of remunerative traffic were small, and that the settling effect of the line on local tribal interests had been exaggerated. Had Sir John Nixon pressed for construction on purely military grounds, he would probably have carried the day, for Sir William Meyer made it clear that if the Commander-in-Chief in India could definitely assure him that the line was absolutely necessary on military grounds, he would not feel justified in opposing it. Moreover, had Sir John Nixon's advance on Baghdad in December 1915 been successful, a railway to Nasiriya would no longer have been a prime necessity.[1]

On General Lake's arrival the question was further examined and a light line was laid down during the spring at Maʿqil, where ocean wharves were under construction. The railway material used was that which Sir John Nixon had refused a year earlier. The rails weighed 21 lb. to the yard, the sleepers were of steel, spaced 2 ft. 8 in. apart. This material was wholly unsuited for any other purpose than a local light tramway, and would have been useless for a line across the desert to Nasiriya. General Lake also considered the possibility of railway construction up the Tigris, and concluded that nothing could be done at the moment, because of the length of time required for the construction of bridges over the Euphrates at Qurmat ʿAli and Qurna. This decision was not altogether happily inspired. Though ocean steamers could not reach Qurna they could get to a point only some twelve miles below it, Nahr ʿUmar (where wharves were constructed later), and it is scarcely conceivable that a bridge across the Euphrates at Qurna could not have been improvised within a month or two if the Government of India had bestirred themselves. Further, ample Arab labour was available on the Tigris, and a beginning could have been made at once, before the high-water season, on a line from Qurna to ʿAmara, which, when extended onwards to Tigris Corps Head-quarters at Shaikh Saʿad, would have been invaluable. On 22nd April 1916 the War Office ordered the construction of the Nasiriya line to be undertaken as rapidly as possible on metre gauge.[1] Mr. J. H. White of the Indian State Railways was appointed Director of Railways, and arrived in June, when work was pressed on with all speed. The line was completed on 29th December 1916. But for the non-arrival of rails and sleepers, it would have been ready in November; in all the circumstances its rapid construction in the height of the hot weather was a feat very creditable to the Railway Directorate, drawn for the most part from India.

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[1] Cd. 8206, p. 58.

In July 1916 the War Office decided to appoint as Director a Military Officer with experience of the home organization and of the working of railways under war conditions, and at the end of September 1916 Colonel G. Lubbock, R.E., arrived. He was an engineer of great ability and his work has proved of enduring value to ʿIraq.

In May 1916 a line from Qurna to ʿAmara, a distance of 75 miles, was sanctioned. The gauge chosen was 2 ft. 6 in., partly because it could be more quickly constructed than metre gauge, partly because some light 2 ft. 6 in. track was available on the spot. It was not, however, until July that the floods subsided sufficiently to enable a beginning to be made. The line was completed on 28th November, 1916. Its daily capacity was 200–300 tons per day. It saved 95 miles of river, which was nowhere more difficult and tortuous than between Qurna and ʿAmara, and proved far easier to maintain than was anticipated, wash-outs and breaches being actually less frequent than in the desert between Zubair and Ur. In August 1916 it was decided to extend this line to Shaikh Saʿad and 15 miles of earth work were completed. The project was, however, abandoned, partly because it was doubtful if India could supply the necessary stock, and partly because it was feared that a 2 ft. 6 in. gauge line could not, even when fully equipped, meet the needs of the Force. A line was, however, built, on the 2 ft. 6 in. gauge, from Shaikh Saʿad on the left bank to Sinn, where large supplies were collected; from this point we were able to control the Shatt-al-Gharraf or Hai stream sufficiently to prevent the Turks from using it as a line to attack our garrison at Nasiriya. This line reached Sinn on 13th September and was extended by 20th December to Imam Mansur. As the line was laid, a line of blockhouses connected by a barbed wire fence on the South African pattern was constructed to the south of it in order to put a stop to thefts by Arabs. As a matter of fact we now know, and had our geographical information been better we might have known then, that the Hai river was of little, if any, military value to the Turks.

In all the circumstances it seems that we should have done better to concentrate on building a metre gauge railway up the Tigris, *unless*

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[1] The decision to use metre gauge was due to the impossibility of obtaining standard gauge rolling stock except from Europe. Indian Railways are all either broad gauge (5 ft. 6 in.) or metre gauge. Standard gauge sleepers and 75 lb. rails were, however, supplied to facilitate a change of gauge later on.

our ultimate objective was Baghdad. In the latter case railway construction along the Euphrates was justified, as it offered the shortest route to Baghdad and would pass through fertile areas, access to which would be difficult in any other way. As things turned out, the Basra–Nasiriya railway, built as a branch, became the trunk line, and all the other lines were dismantled after the Armistice.

No sooner had the Qurna–ʿAmara line been completed on the 2 ft. 6 in. gauge than it was converted to metre gauge, the change-over being effected during April 1917, under the direction of Lt.-Col. Izat, without delaying traffic for a single day—a remarkable feat. The line was of the greatest military use, but the Inland Water Transport Department were still unable to keep Baghdad supplied. The choice lay between continuing the metre gauge from ʿAmara, or supplementing the less easily navigable section between Kut and Bahgdad by a railway. The latter alternative was chosen, and work began in May 1917. It enabled 104 miles of railway to replace nearly 200 miles of difficult navigation. Two gaps remained between Basra and Baghdad, viz. Basra–Qurna and ʿAmara–Kut. The former was filled a year later. The latter was not undertaken, owing to shortage of labour and material.

No single factor contributed more to the eventual success of our aims in Mesopotamia than the Inland Water Transport (Royal Engineers) organized by Major-General W. H. Grey, under the supervision of the Inspector-General of Communications, and none is better worthy of study.[1] Its development is an epic for which sufficient credit has scarcely been given to those immediately concerned. It grew from 6 steamers and 8 tugs in 1915 to an eventual strength of 446 steam tugs and launches, 774 barges, and 414 motor boats; the establishment rose from 7,000 in 1916 to 43,000 at the Armistice, and the tonnage handled increased from 250 tons a day in April to 850 in November 1916, and eventually to some 900 tons a day from Basra to Kut and a further 500 tons from Basra to Baghdad, equivalent to over half a million ton miles daily. This figure was substantially maintained until the Basra–Baghdad railway was in working order. The combined rail and river service eventually delivered close on 3,000 tons per diem in Baghdad.

To keep this great fleet, by far the largest of its kind in the world, in being, an immense organization had to be built up, at the shortest notice. Many craft were erected at Basra, in yards built for the purpose and manned from the United Kingdom and India. Construction was impeded by immense difficulties, some inevitable, but others due to lack of foresight and mismanagement at home. Drawings and erection plans, for example, were not sent out with the first batches of material, but only after a lapse of several months. Instead of being dispatched in charge of an officer, they were in at least one instance packed in a wooden box, which lost its paper label and made one trip to England and back to Basra before its contents were accidentally identified.

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[1] For a full account see Hall.

Quarters for the constructional and dockyard staff had to be built on land reclaimed for the purpose; slipways had to be laid down, workshops erected, and heavy machinery for the repair of every class of river steamer installed.

To transport oil fuel, special barges had to be obtained from India or England, or built on the spot, and large tanks erected up-river. The variety of stores needed to keep the flotilla in service was bewildering: collected as they had been from all over the world, no measure of standardization was possible. Every type of engine, every known form of propulsion, every brand of paddle and screw was represented. The virtues of foresight were often ill-requited by the loss at sea of a long-expected vessel, or by the torpedoing of an ocean-going vessel containing essential spare parts. To man this heterogeneous collection of craft, the War Office and the Government of India sent drafts of men from every part of the globe. Coloured men from Jamaica and Barbados were much in evidence and did particularly well; from Hong-Kong came six thousand Chinese carpenters and mechanics; Somali stokers, Zanzibar boatmen, and mechanics from every province of India and Burma swelled the ranks, and did their work under foremen drawn from English, Scottish, and Irish shipyards. The easy-going Arab and Persian craftsmen saw with amazement British bricklayers laying their 400 bricks a day, and Clydeside riveters working side by side with Indians, at twice an Indian's pay, and doing three or four times as much work.

The clerical work involved was enormous: it was performed smoothly, nor at any time did the supply of competent Indian clerks show signs of running short. The high pay offered was perhaps some explanation, but a genuine spirit of patriotism inspired the majority, and Brahmins, Goanese Christians, Borahs, Indian and Egyptian Muslims, Madrasi and Bengal Christians, Sikhs, Mahrattas, and even Buddhists worked devotedly and uncomplainingly side by side in reasonable harmony: many of the rules of caste being quietly set aside. Pig farms were established both at Baghdad and Basra to meet the demands of Chinese labour, and in part to cater for the taste of the British soldier. The local notables and religious heads at both places were consulted beforehand, and raised no objection provided the herds were located in some secluded spot. At Basra only one landowner protested against the scheme: he was under the impression that the pigs would be wild boars, the only porcine species of which he had any knowledge, and he feared that they might break loose and eat children, as the wild pig of the marsh are reputed to do.

Nor were the responsibilities of the I.W.T. restricted to the efficient maintenance of the river flotilla. The Tigris soon became overcrowded, and to prevent collisions and groundings an elaborate system of river controls became necessary. The Tigris was buoyed from Basra to Baghdad, the buoys being shifted as the channels changed. In 1917 a system of river-training works known as 'bandalling' was instituted. This involved the construction of temporary fences of hurdles to direct the water, at low river, into a particular course, so as to narrow the stream and increase its depth. It was enormously costly and not always effective, but like the buoyage service was amply justified by results. An extra six inches of water at half a dozen difficult places during the autumn meant an extra hundred tons of cargo a day at river-head.

At the outbreak of war, the port of Basra was entirely undeveloped: there were seldom more than three steamers in the port at a time, except during the date season. Loading and unloading was done by native lighters (*mahailas*), and stevedores were generally brought up by each ship from Bushire and dropped there on the return voyage. The bar at the mouth of the Shatt-al-ʿArab allowed even at the top of the tide a maximum draught of nineteen feet; ships drawing more than this had to unload a portion of their cargo into smaller craft, a process often interrupted for several days by high winds. For many miles on either side of the Shatt-al-ʿArab above and below Basra the land was below high-water-mark, intersected by canals, imperfectly protected by mud embankments against excessive flooding, and thickly planted with date-palms. There was practically no wharfage, and no dry land for depots or camps. Road metal for making roads was unobtainable except from Kuwait or other places in the Persian Gulf.

The original Expeditionary Force consisting of one division was not very seriously handicapped by this state of affairs. Stores were dumped at various sites connected only by water or by improvised mule-cart trails; camp sites were occupied haphazard, wherever a dry spot could be found. At the end of 1915 little, if anything, had been done to improve matters. No comprehensive scheme had been developed, and no attempt made to enlarge the Base to meet the needs of a rapidly growing force. The Principal Marine Transport Officer, Commander Hamilton, R.I.M., did indeed make suggestions early in 1915, both for port organization and for large additions to the river fleet, but his proposals were not energetically pushed by the 'Q' Staff at General Head-quarters, nor seriously entertained in India.

The Government of India seems to have been the first authority to realize that a drastic change was necessary; and to this end they sent Sir George Buchanan to Basra at the beginning of 1916, with the high-sounding title of Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy, as already mentioned, but unfortunately without any clear definition of his duties, nor any specific instructions to General Lake as to his relations with the Staff. He arrived when matters were at their worst. India was feverishly buying steamers, some suitable, but mostly unsuitable: owing to bad technical advice many stern-wheelers came from Burma and a few worthless craft were conveyed at enormous cost from the Nile. Many of these were dispatched hastily, out of due season, and not properly decked in, and were in consequence lost at sea; others arrived, but were of little value, for even in 1916 it was the worst rather than the best steamers that were sent.

The congestion of ocean shipping at Basra was appalling, and reduced the Controller of Shipping at home and the commercial world at large to desperation. In April 1916 twenty loaded ships lay at anchor in the stream below Basra for six weeks before they were touched; yet stores were still being demanded and dispatched from India. In March 1917 Salonika, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and East Africa accounted between them for 335 ships of 1,600 tons gross and upwards, and so severe was the strain, both on tonnage and escort, that the question of abandoning some or all of these distant expeditions was seriously considered.[1] The arrangements for shipping stores from Bombay and Karachi were bad: there was no liaison between these ports and Basra, and little ingenuity or understanding was shown at either end in combining the essentials of stevedoring with the immediate necessities of the force in Mesopotamia. It is, for example, sound stevedoring practice to load heavy goods at the bottom of the ship, and put lighter cargo on top: but it often proved disastrous to efficiency at Basra, for the top cargo might consist of wood, not urgently required, which had to be unloaded at a special wharf up-stream, or fodder, which had its own wharf a few miles below Basra, whilst the heavy goods at the bottom were vital necessities, immediately required. The enormous increase in imports was not due to a sudden expansion in military needs but to the fact that shortly before the arrival of Sir G. MacMunn it had been decided to maintain in Mesopotamia a reserve of supplies of all kinds sufficient to meet the needs of the force for three months. Each department was told by the 'Q' Staff to indent on India for what it needed to bring its reserves up to the authorized amount. No thought was given to the congestion that would inevitably ensue. The available wharfage and subsidiary services were equal to handling five weeks' supplies during one month, but no more. Had indents been regulated on this basis, reserves could have been accumulated gradually, and the appalling waste of tonnage and of man-power avoided. It was a case of mismanagement pure and simple.

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[1] See G. E. Fayle, *History of the Great War*, *Seaborne Trade*, iii. 162. The approximate distance by sea from London to Basra is 6,700 miles, from Bombay 1,700 miles. The distance from London to Capetown is about 6,200 miles.

The congestion was so great that Sir George Buchanan found it very difficult to obtain shipping-space for the bulky material needed for the new wharves, essential though they were, and it was some months before he got into his stride.

One of his first steps was to obtain three dredgers from India, with one of which he reclaimed a large area of land at Maʿqil, the date palms having previously been felled. Simultaneously wharves were constructed, of imported timber; pile-drivers of great power were employed, and every type of modern port equipment brought into service. By the end of 1917 berths for twelve steamers had been completed at Maʿqil, connected with the Basra–Nasiriya railway line, with a cement road to Basra and ʿAshar, and with a light railway line to the various camps. Yet even these wharves proved insufficient to meet requirements: during the winter of 1917-18 never less than twenty ocean steamers were in port, and six or seven entered or cleared daily, the average time of clearing being three days. Such was the shortage of ocean shipping, and so great, in consequence, th importance attached by the Shipping Controller[1] to quick discharge, that it was decided to start a fresh series of wharves fifteen miles up-stream at Nahr ʿUmar, where there was a convenient stretch of deep water adjacent to a substantial area of dry land. Four berths were erected and all railway material and rolling stock disembarked here. It proved to be a clean, healthy locality, and reinforcements were subsequently accommodated there pending transfer up-river. Later on it was used as a camp for refugees and finally for demobilization purposes.

Dredging schemes were also developed during 1916, and made much progress during 1917 and 1918. Though the railway reached Nasiriya by the end of 1916, it was considered desirable to provide an alternative line of communication by water, and a channel was dredged across the Hammar Lake from Kubáish to the Euphrates at a cost of about three million pounds sterling. It never justified its existence, for at no time was the railway seriously threatened. It was not completed till 1919, when it was abandoned. The alignment was, moreover, altered under General Maude's instructions[1] so as to reach the Euphrates via the Mazliq channel instead of through the more northerly ʿAkaika branch. The change, which involved considerable delay and expense, might conceivably have been justified had it been intended to maintain the channel in time of peace: the ʿAkaika channel had for years past been closed by irrigation dams, on which depended a large area under rice, whereas the Mazliq branch was free of any such obstructions. The Arab cultivators would, however, have cheerfully accepted as compensation for loss of crops a sum in cash which would have been insignificant in comparison with the expenditure involved by the change of route. I mention this fact because, at a later date, the Civil Administration was pressed to contribute a large sum towards the cost of dredging operations on the Hammar Lake, and my refusal was regarded in some quarters as unreasonable and almost contumacious. I was, however, able to show, later on, that the maintenance of the channel would be an impossible, as well as an unfair burden on civil revenues, already saddled with a deficit on the running of the railway.

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[1] The dual control of the Shipping Controller in London and of the Government of India over ocean shipping was an impediment to economy of tonnage, as it interfered with the centralization and interchangeability of services at which the Department aimed. (Fayle, ii. 211.)

Dredging was in active progress at other points throughout the latter half of 1916 and the whole of 1917. The berths at Maʿqil required deepening, the bar which forms each year just below Mohammerah required attention, and an attempt, not altogether successful, was made to improve conditions on the Shatt-al-ʿArab bar. The dredger *Cormorant* was borrowed from Rangoon, and worked on the bar from July 1916 to April 1917, removing some 400,000 tons of silt and increasing the depth by from one foot to eighteen inches; the improvement, however, was not permanent.

Another matter which occupied Sir George Buchanan's attention was the possibility of increasing the depth of the Tigris between ʿAli Gharbi and ʿUzair, by reducing the off-take of the great canals or spillways, which carried away, at and above ʿAmara, two-thirds of the water, reducing the river at the Narrows to a mere ditch in which two steamers could not pass each other. No serious technical difficulties were involved, but the Arab inhabitants viewed the idea with undisguised and not unnatural hostility, for they had from time immemorial relied upon the generous floods to fertilize their rice-fields with an increment of silt, and any reduction in the water in the summer and autumn would throw large areas out of cultivation. The problem was tackled with characteristic energy by Mr. Dobbs to whom, as Revenue Commissioner, it fell personally to inspect the areas likely to be affected, which had hitherto been unvisited by any officials, whether Turkish or British. His report satisfied the Inspector-General of Communications and the Army Commander that the game was not worth the candle, and the project was dropped.

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[1] Moberly, iii. 69.

It remains to mention that the floods at Basra were abnormally high both in 1915 and 1916. In 1915 this was due to natural causes—heavy snowfall in the highlands of Turkey and rainfall in the spring. In 1916 the floods were ascribed by local wiseacres to the construction during 1915 of an embankment from near Maʿqil to the rising ground near Shuʿaiba. This embankment, which was originally designed to ensure that the road and railway line to Zubair, Shuʿaiba, and Nasiriya would not be flooded as in previous years, prevented the surplus water of the Euphrates from spilling out of the Qurmat ʿAli[1] channel into the Khor[2] ʿAbdulla. Subsequent investigations proved this view to be unfounded: the construction of the embankment has undoubtedly tended to make Basra somewhat hotter, drier, and probably more healthy, but has had no appreciable effect on the water-level.

These heavy floods impeded progress in all directions, diverting much labour from important permanent work to the temporary construction of embankments: not until the level began to fall, towards the middle of June, was it possible to concentrate upon the larger projects in hand.[3]

Other matters dealt with by the River Conservancy Department during 1916 included lighting and buoying the Shatt-al-ʿArab river and bar, and a great extension of the pilotage system. The lighting and buoying of the Persian Gulf as a whole had been undertaken by the Government of India, jointly with the British Government, just before the war. It was not, however, until December 1915 that any steps were taken to improve the buoying of the river, or the bar; and until lighted buoys were installed, during 1916, no shipping could enter the river at night. This involved much delay, and in addition meant that disembarkation took place in the heat of the day instead of in the early hours of the morning. By the end of 1916 a simple and effective scheme was installed.

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[1] When in 1837 Colonel Chesney made his survey, the Euphrates, flowing between well-defined banks, joined the Tigris at Qurna, 46 miles above Basra, but since that date the Euphrates has broken through its right bank, and cut a channel into the Shatt-al-ʿArab at Qurmat ʿAli, six miles above Basra. See Chesney.

[2] Not Hor, as in the R.G.S. *List of Names in ʿIraq*. Hor = a fresh watermarsh; Khor = an arm of the sea.

[3] Disastrous floods at Basra occur periodically, and unless early precautions are taken are liable to do immense damage. A Report to his Majesty's Foreign Office by the British Consul at Basra refers to a flood in 1896 when the waters flooded the date-groves and there remained stagnant, destroying, it is estimated, two million trees. For a discussion as to the causes of floods see Wilson, *Geog. Journ.*, March 1925.

The Pilotage Service on the Shatt-al-ʿArab had its roots in the remote past: it was manned by Persian subjects, natives of the island of Kharag, who had acquired a prescriptive right to, and an effective monopoly of, this service, on which their forbears had been engaged from time immemorial. The ships of the Indian Navy and of the Honourable East India Company had used them regularly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and during the Anglo-Persian War of 1856 the pilots had not refused duty, but continued to serve. In recognition of their steadfastness the British India Steam Navigation Company had agreed to use Kharag pilots only, and their example had been followed by other lines. The pilots were picked up at Bushire and dropped on the return journey. There were scarcely more than a dozen men in all, a number wholly inadequate to the situation created by the war. The first step was to place on the bar a pilot vessel in charge of a European pilot-master; the bar was next surveyed, and the pilots required to follow a definite track, which tended to improve with use; additional men (all of Kharag) were enrolled and finally Europeans, skilled men from Calcutta or Rangoon, were employed within the port as harbour-masters, to lay vessels alongside the wharves, and take them to and from their anchorages in the main stream.

The cumulative effect of these changes was revolutionary: shipping was speeded up, and costs lowered; it was, however, a long time before the local commercial community adapted itself to new methods, and as late as 1924 the desire was frequently expressed in Basra to abolish the compulsory use of wharves and to revert to the old system of lighterage. It was long, too, before the commercial world could bring itself to realize that the railway was bound to divert traffic from the river. We are a conservative race, and it is not only our soldiers, sailors, and administrators who are slow to adapt themselves to new conditions.

One of the results of the transfer of responsibility for the Mesopotamian campaign to the War Office was the belated discovery that mechanical transport could be used to advantage on a large scale. In some respects, conditions were ideal: supplies of petrol, in bulk or in tins, could be obtained in any quantity at the Base from Abadan, whereas fodder for mules had to brought at great cost from India. The useful radius of mechanical transport was at least ten times as great as that of wheeled mule transport: the economy in man-power was in the same proportion. Its adoption on a large scale was perhaps the most important of the many new factors which made it possible for General Maude to envisage the occupation of Baghdad. We might indeed have captured Baghdad without its aid, but it is certain that we could have gone no further, for beyond Baghdad the Tigris is for practical purposes unnavigable. At the beginning of 1916 all that had been done was to send about 100 motor lorries from Egypt to Basra:[1] these were too heavy to be of use on the Tigris front during the winter months, though they were invaluable at the Base once roads had been made. There was at this time very little mechanical transport in India, where its possibilities had scarcely been explored before the War, and the General Staff in Basra seems scarcely to have thought of using it on a large scale: the immediate difficulties were great—roads had first to be made, and we were all to some extent bemused by our endless battles with mud and flood. The experience gained by the Tigris Corps in the summer of 1916 showed that for many months in the year the country could be traversed in all directions by car. The lesson was not lost on the Staff, and during 1916 a beginning was made by Sir Percy Lake in organizing mechanical transport as an integral part of the Force. A Base M.T. Depot arrived in June, and Workshops and Stores branches were constituted. A few motor-cycles had arrived by the end of September, when Major Leland arrived to take charge of all mechanical transport in the country. He has written a valuable account of the development of this vital branch of the service, but the ordinary reader will not gather from his narrative a correct idea of the extent to which the Force and the Civil Administration depended upon his Department, nor of the extraordinary efficiency which it attained, in the face of very great difficulties, under Colonel Leland's direction. He and his subordinates infused into every unit under their command a spirit of helpfulness and a determination to get the best out of their organization, without slavish adherence to red tape. The Department had its failings, particularly in post-war days: discipline is at all times hard to maintain in M.T. Companies, where the men are scattered up and down the lines of communication and are beyond supervision for a great part of the time. The drivers were largely recruited from India, and included men from every province; language was a great difficulty, which they partially solved by learning enough English for their purpose. As in the I.W.T., almost every type of driver had his peculiarities of diet, and a distinctive mentality. Few were competent when they arrived; they had to be trained locally; some were apt to learn, others the reverse, but the average M.T. officer was remarkably resourceful, and less apt to belabour evil than to pick out and encourage good. On 1st January 1919 there were some 7,000 military motor vehicles in the country, including about 100 armoured cars, and the

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[1] *O.H.* ii. 100 n.: No. 596 Company A.S.C. (3-ton Peerless lorries): see Leland.

R.A.S.C. (M.T.) personnel totalled some 400 officers and 12,000 other ranks, of whom three-quarters were British. The Department left an enduring mark on the country, for soon after the Armistice a Mechanical Transport branch of the Civil Administration was formed, which trained hundreds of ʿIraqis to drive and repair cars; local merchants soon realized that this new form of transport was applicable to civil needs, and large numbers of lorries and cars were bought, as demobilization progressed, for use on the roads leading in every direction from Baghdad and Basra. Money spent on roads was not grudged, and the pilgrim traffic by car from Khanaqin to Karbala and Najaf soon attained great dimensions. Cars began to displace horse-drawn vehicles on the Baghdad–Aleppo road, and in 1919 the first cars crossed the desert from the Euphrates to Syria.

The problems of the Army Ordnance Service in Mesopotamia were in the main those of the force as a whole. Until the War Office assumed control of the campaign, it was grievously under-staffed and depended wholly on India for its requirements. The Army in India, for reasons explained in Chapter XI, had not been permitted to accumulate war reserves such as had always existed in the United Kingdom: Indian troops had hitherto been furnished with only a bare minimum of essential fighting equipment, leaving them to provide for their own domestic wants and even, in time of peace, to clothe and feed themselves. On the outbreak of war, and for two years after, the Government of India and Army Head-quarters India within their respective spheres habitually under-estimated our difficulties and attempted to regulate supplies by peace-time precedents. The burden of the justified outcry against India and its ways was, however, of a more serious kind. It was transparently clear, especially to the experts of the Ordnance Department, that no serious attempt was being made to mobilize its vast resources or to provide many of the extra domestic articles that were indispensable to the troops in war areas dependent on India. The officers and staff of the Indian Ordnance Department performed miracles with the scanty loaves and fishes at their disposal, but this policy had its limitations, and from their point of view the War Office assumed control only just in time.

During 1916 and 1917 the Base Depot, selected and designed for one division and now serving five, was reorganized and shifted to an area at Maʿqil which had been previously drained and cleared of palm trees. The condition of ammunition was in 1916 a serious problem: fused howitzer and other high-explosive shells, lying in the open and exposed for months on end to a sun temperature of 160°, exuded freely. Mills grenades became unserviceable, owing to the ammonal filling having in many cases crystallized and become inert, and trench mortar bombs were suspect. In at least one division it had been the practice to issue such doubtful ammunition for training purposes! The practice caused several deaths and numerous casualties until the Ordnance Department stepped in. A large ammunition depot, constructed to resist heat, and isolated in the desert between Maʿqil and Zubair, was built to hold stocks.

There was for long great confusion owing to the various directorates making independent demands through their own Head-quarters in India, so that, just as had occurred in the Crimea, one had a surplus of what another sorely needed.[1] The responsibility for all supplies was eventually concentrated in the hands of the Ordnance Department, but it was not until the middle of 1918 that the change was complete.

A notable contribution to the comfort of troops in Mesopotamia was made by a private individual, Rai Bahadur Bhuta Singh of Sialkot, famous throughout India for the manufacture of sports and camp requisites. By arrangement with Army Head-quarters in Simla he raised certain tent-repair units,[2] and sent them out to Mesopotamia, where they became part of the Ordnance establishment. The units were officered by his sons and relations, who were given temporary commissions, and staffed by his own employees. These self-contained units worked admirably and never gave the slightest trouble; the men were skilled at their trade and most of the officers were experts: all alike felt that they owed a duty—to Bhuta Singh as well as to the State. The organization was well suited to the special conditions of India and of the tent-making trade, and the possibility extending it to other industries in future campaigns deserves consideration.

The existence of two types of rifle requiring different types of ammunition was for some time a serious complication, but it was less harassing than the fact that the standard patterns of army stores made in India differed from those prescribed by the War Office. The result was that throughout Mesopotamia there were dual scales and types of equipment: this was, of course, to some extent inevitable and even desirable, for it would have been folly to have prescribed for use in India articles of a type that could not be made on the spot when an equally satisfactory article could be made in India. There were undoubtedly instances where standardization would have been impracticable, but in numerous cases there was nothing to warrant a divergence of pattern, which largely increased the difficulties of maintenance.

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[1] The late Major-General A. Forbes, in his work *A History of the Ordnance Services*, 1929, vol. iii, states (p. 277) that the Director General of Ordnance in India once sent the Royal Engineers at Basra a long list of tools which were 'surplus to India's requirements'. By the same post he returned to the Ordnance Department at Basra a demand for similar tools, saying that none were available.

[2] Forbes, iii. 278.

I have attempted to give a rough idea of some of the principal activities which occupied the minds and absorbed the energies of 'Q' Staff at General Head-quarters, and of the Inspector-General of Communications. The list might be prolonged almost indefinitely, for there were few matters in which he was not actively concerned, and to which he did not contribute something of value. General MacMunn deserves to be ranked second only to General Maude as the organizer of victory, and I have no hesitation in saying that had he remained in 1920 as Commander-in-Chief the course of events in Mesopotamia in that year would have been very different; but I must refrain from anticipating a chapter of history which will be unfolded in a subsequent volume.

Reference has frequently been made in the foregoing chapters to the paucity of our aircraft. When General Nixon ordered an advance on Baghdad he had at his disposal three aeroplanes and two converted seaplanes; just before the advance began he received a reinforcement of four B.E. 2C machines, one of which was lost a few days later. So precious were the remainder that further long-distance reconnaissances were forbidden at a time when they would have been of special value. For the greater part of February General Aylmer had only one machine fit to fly. The Turkish machines were more numerous, faster, and better for fighting purposes: they were able to bomb Kut and General Aylmer's camp at discretion. On 7th March the total number of available British machines on the Tigris front was nine, some of which were in bad repair. By the end of April this number had increased to eleven, of which three were seaplanes, and there was also a Kite Balloon Section of the R.N.A.S., which could only operate when the wind was favourable. The aeroplanes did good work in dropping food into Kut, carrying in all some 16,800 lbs; but the command of the air remained with the Turks, and during May and June it was overwhelming. Lt.-Col. J. E. Tennant arrived in August with new and better machines. They commenced to harry the Turkish aerodromes and camps, and to seek the Turkish machines, which were manned by German aviators, in single combat. They had varying success, but the effect of this offensive was profound. I came to know many of the surviving members of the original No. 30 Squadron in after years, and I retain no more vivid memory of army life in Mesopotamia than the irrepressible gaiety and superabundant vitality of flying officers. During 1918–20 I often visited R.A.F. messes, and especially that of C Flight, No. 72 Squadron, where I was attracted by these qualities, which R.A.F. units possessed in a degree that no military unit ever quite attained. They had little of traditional military discipline or of the forms of address and behaviour rigorously maintained in infantry messes, by none more scrupulously than by officers promoted from the ranks. But they were individually courageous and full of enterprise, often reckless. I must not, however, further anticipate here my impressions of later years, nor can I attempt to describe here or elsewhere the achievements of our airmen in Mesopotamia during the campaign. These have been finely told by Lt.-Col. Tennant; it is enough to say that our airmen were less affected than other units by the mental lassitude and depression that overcame many soldiers during the awful summer months spent in inactivity on the Tigris. A reorganization scheme came into force in September, simultaneously with, but independently of, General Maude's appointment, under which the R.F.C. in Mesopotamia became part of the new Middle East Brigade, with Head-quarters at Cairo commanded by General W. G. S. Salmond; the scheme worked admirably—'the spoke of communication', says Tennant, 'led henceforth direct to the hub; there was no need to delay or refer to others, we could act at once.'

In October we were visited by yet another Member of Parliament, Major (now Sir) Godfrey Collins: he was not less distinguished than his colleagues and predecessors, Sykes, Herbert, and Lloyd. He was, like them, sent on an official mission, having been deputed by the Army Council to report on the working of the Quartermaster-General's services in Mesopotamia. He spent nearly three months in the country and left in December well satisfied that, to use his own words, 'whatever may have happened in the past, everything that human foresight, money and work could do was being done to-day for the welfare of the troops'.[1] Addressing the House of Commons shortly after his return, he remarked, in the course of an impressive speech:[2]

> 'The position in Mesopotamia to-day is a striking testimony to the advantage that accrues from the employment of new men, with active brains and vigorous constitutions . . . The application of this principle is saving the lives of men on the plains of Mesopotamia this afternoon.'

His views carried the more weight because he had been a member of the War Office Supplies Committee in 1912–13, and continued to occupy similar positions till the end of the war. I had more than one opportunity of seeing something of him; his visit did us all good and I think that all in Basra who had met him and his colleagues regarded the House of Commons with increased respect. I often wished, in later years, that we had more such visitors: their place, alas, was filled by others.

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[1] *O.H.* iii. 69 n.

[2] Debates, H.C. 12.2.17.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD

'If mistakes are made, we as a nation know how to repair them. That has been done in Mesopotamia.'

(MR. BONAR LAW (Chancellor of the Exchequer) in House of Commons, 7th February 1917.)

Discussions on policy. Question of advance on Baghdad. Hai River reached and bridged. Muhammad 'Abdul Hasan position taken. Gallantry of British and Indian troops. Cavalry Division at Hai. Khadhairi bend. Achievements of Indian Army. Clearance of Dahra Bend. The Shamran crossing. Sannaiyat. Cavalry at Shamran. Naval operations. Royal Flying Corps. Questions of policy. The decision to advance.

IT will be evident from the foregoing chapter that by the autumn of 1916 the army was ready for a resumption of hostilities with a far better chance of success than in the previous year. The morale of the troops at General Maude's disposal was as excellent as their quality; especially is this true of those who came from Egypt, and most of all the Indian Corps from France. The latter formation included two Divisions who had been through much hard fighting in the mud of Flanders before they reached Mesopotamia, where, in the early part of the year, they had seen yet heavier fighting and worse mud. Though their casualties had been very heavy in France, and again in Mesopotamia, the formations had developed traditions and *esprit de corps*; and in some Brigades a *camaraderie* had grown up between British and Indian ranks which had no parallel in history since 1842, when the 35th Native Infantry in Afghanistan, emulating Clive's sepoys at Arcot, gave up their rations to the European soldiers of the 13th Foot, and feasted them at parting. Behind the lines, General Maude could be reasonably assured that there would be no failure which human vigilance could prevent, and that no contingency would arise against which human foresight could provide.

Nor need he fear that his lines of communication would be seriously menaced by hostile bodies: during the early part of 1916 Arab propensities for brutal murder and for theft had had a disproportionate influence on the campaign. Shortage of transport, lack of mobile cavalry, and lack, above all, of good cavalry leadership had made it impossible to brush aside these ghostly evils by a vigorous offensive, nor is it likely that any punitive action on our part would have had more

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, Callwell, Marshall.

than a transient effect: it might even have acted as an additional irritant. We know, for example, that the energetic punitive measures undertaken repeatedly in the years 1915, 1916, and 1917 on the Nasiriya front were remarkably barren of practical results. The tribal Arab lacked neither courage nor initiative, neither leaders nor fresh recruits; their women-kind smiled upon their escapades; the motive of pillage was all-sufficient. They had never since Shuʿaiba attempted to act in concert with the Turks, or to attack in large bodies: all experience showed that we had little to fear from them so long as we were successful; but they had become bolder and bolder throughout the hot weather, and had seriously harassed convoys between Shaikh Saʿad and Sinn Abtar ever since 29th May, when the 3rd Division was pushed forward to occupy a line running from Maqasis through Imam Mansur to Dujaila. General Maude refused to allow his attention to be diverted by them from his main object, the defeat of the Turk: but just before his death his attitude towards various problems of the civil administration was undoubtedly influenced by the recollection of what his men had suffered at the hands of Arabs, nor was he the only general officer whose attitude towards the problems of peace was informed by a prudent recollection of the recent past.

General Maude's place as G.O.C. Tigris Corps was taken by Maj-Gen. A. S. Cobbe, V.C.; these men were the most junior Majors-General in the Force; the latest-joined Major-General, MacMunn, was Inspector-General of Communications.

In October General Maude left Basra never to return: he took up quarters close to the front line; he left them only to move forward. Before leaving Basra he met Sir Charles Monro, who paid a visit to Mesopotamia on his way to take up the appointment of Commander-in-Chief in India.

As a result of much discussion at home and with India, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir William Robertson) telegraphed on 30th September to Sir C. Monro as follows:

> 'The instructions of His Majesty's Government. *Begins*—The Mission of the Mesopotamia Force is to protect the Oil Fields and Pipe Lines in the vicinity of the Karun river, to maintain our occupation and control of the Basra wilayat, and to deny hostile access to the Persian Gulf and Southern Persia. At present no fresh advance to Baghdad can be contemplated, but it is the desire of His Majesty's Government, if and when possible, to establish British influence in the Baghdad wilayat. This further advance should not be undertaken unless and until sanction for it is given, but in the meantime the General Officer Commanding should continue to improve the river and railway communications and maintain as forward a position as the state of his communications will allow and as can be made secure tactically without incurring heavy losses, whether caused by the enemy or by

climatic conditions. Military and political considerations connected with Nasiriya, the Muntafiq and Bani Lam tribes and the Pusht-i-Kuh–Bakhtiari country suggest that our present positions should be maintained if this can be achieved without undue sacrifices, but we desire your views as to the feasibility of this course. Doubtless you will consult Sir Percy Cox as to the effect on the Arabs of any withdrawal. Further, the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force should ensure that hostile parties do not work down south across the line Shushtar–Isfahan. No further reinforcements for the force must be expected. On the contrary it may become necessary to withdraw the 13th Division, which was sent to Mesopotamia in order to assist in the attempted relief of Kut-al-Amara. *Ends.*

'It will be observed that it is the wish of His Majesty's Government that the force should be kept as far forward as feasible, and in this connexion I wish you to understand that so far as I am personally concerned the proposal as to the dispositions of the force is a matter which I leave entirely to your judgment.

'It will also be observed that the responsibilities of the Force extend to the Shushtar–Isfahan direction, but this is not likely to make any material demand on the force.

'The necessity of relieving some of the white battalions by battalions from India should also be considered.

'With regard to feasibility of eventual advance in Baghdad direction I have informed the War Committee that in my opinion

(*a*) We have not got and for an indefinite time are unlikely to have available the number of troops necessary to seize and hold Baghdad.

(*b*) For a long time to come we cannot hope to maintain them there even if we had them, owing to long and difficult communications.

(*c*) In other respects their positions at Baghdad would be unfavourable in a military sense and would have no decisive effect on the war.

'The whole situation should be considered by you with Cox and Maude in all its aspects and your proposals should be reported with special reference to any change in dispositions you deem necessary.

'The necessity for being as strong as possible in the decisive theatre especially next spring should be kept in mind.'

This telegram was fully discussed by Sir C. Monro with General Maude and with Sir Percy Cox, and as a result the following telegram was sent, a month later, by Sir C. Monro, in reply:

'Concerning the role assigned to this force.

'An entirely passive attitude would in my judgment be unprofitable and bad for the troops. I realize fully that visions of Baghdad are beyond our sphere, and hold out no special advantages. But whilst dismissing such a project much might be done here which would enhance our prestige to a great degree, ease the supply question, and hearten the troops.

'Maude would deprive the Turks of the supplies coming from the vicinity of the Hai, if he were to move forward his left on to that river, and very likely would manœuvre them out of their position on the right bank of the Tigris. Having sealed the Hai, a forward movement to Samawa from Nasiriya could be made with very little risk. From Samawa greater control would be exercised by us over all tribesmen, and confidence in our prestige and intention to stay would be greatly increased. This outline could be accomplished, I think, with insignificant losses, and at any rate it is fully realized by Maude that severe losses must not be incurred.'

In the light of what happened six months later, these telegrams are not easy to understand; nor is it easy in retrospect to understand why with a force of 150,000 men at his disposal, and with an organization so admirable, and devised at such vast expense, the War Office should assign to General Maude a defensive role. As in 1915, so in 1916, the British Government desired to occupy Baghdad (the words 'to establish British influence in the Baghdad wilayat' can convey no other meaning), but without heavy losses or additional troops; their instructions, perhaps of set purpose, left General Maude free to do what he thought fit. It was not to be expected that a man of his soldierly nature, who had already played so distinguished a part in military operations on other fronts, would consent to leave the garrison of Kut unavenged, or our defeat on the Tigris unrequited. Yet in no documents left by him is there any suggestion that he regarded Baghdad as his ultimate objective: his preliminary manœuvres on the right bank seem to have been designed rather to evict the enemy from his entrenched position by manœuvring than to surround and destroy him. His first objective was the Hai. Operations began on 12th December and were completely successful by the 15th; the weather was good and visibility excellent, thanks to recent rains. The water-level in the Hai was so low as to offer no serious obstacle: it was bridged in two places, and entrenched positions secured on both banks. Our aeroplanes were effective in reconnaissance, and favoured by moonlight were successful in destroying the Turkish pontoon bridge on its way up-stream from Shamran. Baghaila was raided, and enemy shipping and stores destroyed.

It is clear from the Operation Orders issued by General Maude that for some reason, of which we have no record, he did not wish, at this stage, to use his overwhelming force in such a way as to surround the Turks on the right bank: he was content to compel withdrawal. In loyal conformity with the instructions of the C.I.G.S. he was insistent on the avoidance of casualties, and made no attempt to use the Cavalry Division as a striking force. On the south or right bank of the Tigris a little below its junction with the Hai lay a weak Turkish Brigade; opposed to them was a Cavalry Division and a whole corps. It is not easy to understand why this small enemy force was not destroyed forthwith and the right bank cleared before reinforcements could arrive, but General Maude's methodical mentality is a guarantee that in deciding against this course he was acting on a carefully thought-out plan. It is probable that his first care was to avoid casualties, in conformity with the instructions he had received.

He next attempted to bridge the Tigris: he thought at first that it might be done between Sannaiyat and Maqasis, but General Cobbe advised against this. An attempt was therefore made further upstream in the Husaini bend, on 20th December, but was unsuccessful; one pontoon was launched, but the carriers were at once killed or wounded and General Maude did not feel justified in pressing further, in view of his instructions as to casualties, and the column was withdrawn. He was now definitely attempting, to use his own words, 'to cut and not merely to threaten the enemy's communications, as was previously done'. Yet it is legitimate to doubt whether the attempt of 20th December under General Crocker was intended to succeed. As has been clearly pointed out by Major Dewing,[1] there had been no technical reconnaissance and no aeroplane photographs: the Bridging Train had never used their newly arrived transport. The only information as to the width of the river was an Arab estimate obtained through Major Leachman. The only persons surprised were the G.O.C. Cavalry Division and the O.C. Bridging Train. The abortive attempt strengthened the conviction of the Turks that a crossing was impossible. That may well have been General Maude's real object.

After the failure of the operations on the 20th, General Maude was informed by Sir William Robertson that he might incur casualties up to 25 per cent. Meanwhile, however, the weather had broken, and though the light railway was being rapidly pushed on towards the Hai he found it difficult to keep the troops on his left flank supplied. As a preliminary, the Cavalry Division were ordered to undertake operations against Gassab's Fort. Lying at some distance from the river on the right bank, this had long been the head-quarters of hostile Arabs, whose activities had been a continual source of annoyance throughout the operations and had involved the detachment of large numbers of troops for purely protective duties. The Cavalry Division made no attempt to surround the place, but bombarded it at 3,000 yards range; the Arabs made off to the south unscathed, leaving 3,000 sheep, which were brought back to camp; some grain was also taken. After this the Cavalry retired to rest at 'Arab village' till 6th January, as they could not be kept supplied on the Hai.

General Maude next turned his attention to the clearing of the right bank: he was no longer hampered by his instructions to avoid casualties, but it was more than ever important to avoid more reverses. British arms had suffered defeat on the Tigris on a scale unknown in Asia since the Afghan War of 1842; a second failure might be disastrous. The methods adopted by the 3rd Division under General Keary were systematic and deliberate, and based upon experience gained on the Western front. The first objective was the Muhammad ʿAbdul Hasan position in the Khadhairi bend of the Tigris. It was taken by means of an accelerated siege approach, over a period of just over two weeks, every step gained being consolidated successively. Preliminary operations took a fortnight; an advance of over 2,000 yards was made over a frontage of two miles, at a cost of 350 casualties; by 7th January the troops were within assaulting distance. The major operation was undertaken on the 9th and crowned with almost complete success. It was preceded by a heavy bombardment of the Sannaiyat position, which was repeatedly raided by the 7th Division, and by demonstrations against the Hai bridge-heads system and the Shamran bend. These moves, together with a raid on Baghaila by the Cavalry Division, were intended to divert the attention of the enemy; they were to some extent rendered abortive by heavy mist, which, however, served to prevent the Turkish air service from observing our movements. At nine o'clock, after a heavy bombardment which inflicted severe losses on the enemy,[1] the decisive blow was struck; the first objective was taken with little loss, but further progress was prevented for some time by the stern valour of the Turkish infantry, who counter-attacked with the greatest courage and determination. Fierce fighting followed, in which one company of the 1st Manchesters was almost annihilated. Though overwhelmed by superior numbers, their Lewis guns jammed by mud, and unable to obtain artillery support, they refused to give way. This regiment lost during the day 12 officers and 235 men, but the sacrifice was not made in vain. Nor were the Indian battalions inferior to the men of Lancashire in determination or in valour. Two sections of Sappers and Miners (Madras Christians), with a company of the 34th Pioneers composed of Mazbi Sikhs, and one company of the 59th Rifles, advanced through the mist; they also were taken by surprise. Few of them were inured to war, almost none of them had used bombs before or had had experience of warfare outside the trenches. But they held their ground doggedly, and engaged in a hand-to-hand combat which kept the Turks at bay till a reserve company of the Manchesters came up and forced the Turks back. Recruiting in Lancashire, as elsewhere, was a source of anxiety at this time: considerable difficulty was being experienced by local tribunals in applying the provisions of the Military Service Act, and many hours were spent by the House of Commons in ventilating individual cases of hardship. Yet neither in this action, nor that of the Diyala, which will be for ever remembered for the indomitable gallantry of Lancashire men, was any reference permitted by the censor to the name of the regiment. Of all the various sources on which moral force in war depends, military honour was, in the new armies not less than in the regular battalions, the most powerful; but at this time and for months to come it received little encouragement either at home or in India.

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[1] See Dewing (1).

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[1] How effective was this bombardment, and how gallantly it was withstood by the Turks, may be gathered from a telegram found in the trenches a few days later from Ismail Hakki, who commanded the 45th Turkish Division. 'The steadfastness of the troops . . . who held their ground . . . in spite of bloody losses during to-day's bombardment in the mist is above all praise. The Corps Commander kisses the eyes of all ranks and thanks them. I too kiss all their eyes and thank them.'

The check administered to the Manchesters and the Indian detachments that had come to their aid was but momentary. General Keary brought his guns to bear effectively upon the threatened point; after an artillery bombardment lasting fifteen minutes the Manchesters advanced again and recaptured the position from which they had been temporarily ejected. In another portion of the line the 9th Brigade, including the 1/1st Gurkhas, the 105th Mahrattas and the 93rd Infantry, had advanced in face of considerable opposition. Nothing more could be done for the moment, and under cover of darkness the Manchesters and the 59th, who had lost heavily, as also had the 1/1st Gurkhas and 105th Mahrattas, were withdrawn from the front, their place being taken by the 2/124th Baluchistan Infantry. The 47th Sikhs had also distinguished themselves, though their losses had been less severe. Thus did these Indian regiments, mainly Muslims, in co-operation with units from the crowded manufacturing towns of northern England, defeat on Turkish soil the most powerful force ever put in the field by the Commander of the Faithful.

Fighting continued without intermission from the 11th to the 28th January: it was characterized by a series of short advances, frequently entailing hard fighting by small forces commanded by junior officers, whose initiative had greater scope than is ordinarily offered by modern warfare. Step by step the Turks were forced back, their stubborn opposition overcome by the determination with which successive assaults were made. On the night of the 19th Ismail Hakki evacuated his last foothold, and withdrew across the river, leaving General Maude in possession of the Khadhairi bend. Our casualties during the eleven days' fighting totalled over sixteen hundred men; those of the Turks were probably even greater, for they left hundreds of dead in their trenches. For them it was a critical and costly reverse, and proved a turning-point in the campaign.

While these operations were in progress, the Cavalry Division moved against the town of Hai, some 20 miles south of Kut on the river of that name. In the whole course of the campaign on the Tigris no better opportunity had presented itself for effective punitive operations against a group of tribes who had consistently massacred our wounded, plundered our dead, and harassed our supply columns whenever opportunity offered. The punitive operations against Gassab's fort had been bungled: now was a chance to teach the tribes a lesson.

Retribution was overdue, and General Maude would have been well advised to 'set a mark' on the principal town of a neighbourhood with a record so evil: nothing of the sort was done. The Cavalry Division were indeed sent to Hai, but simply to ascertain what supplies were procurable locally. After meeting with some slight opposition from Arabs on the 10th, they occupied the town on the morning of the 11th. The sycophantish knaves gave them, in the words of the *Official History*,

> 'a friendly welcome and readily furnished them, on payment, with supplies, which were found to be plentiful. Some Turkish arms and ammunition in a Turkish Government building were confiscated and arrangements were made with the inhabitants for a future supply to General Maude's force of sheep and vegetables, though some doubts were felt as to whether these arrangements would be kept by the Arabs. On the afternoon of the 13th General Maude sent General Crocker orders to return, bringing with him as much grain as his transport could carry. On the morning of the 14th, the crowds which collected to see the Cavalry start still maintained a friendly attitude, but, as soon as the rear-guard had left the town about a mile behind, these Arabs at once started to follow up and attack the retiring British Cavalry. Joined by many others from fortified villages on both flanks, the Arabs continued their pursuit for several hours. There was a good deal of detached fighting, but the British contented themselves with rear-guard tactics, though in one instance a squadron (14th Lancers) took advantage of an opening and charged a gathering of Arabs, doing considerable damage.'

The G.O.C. Cavalry Division, which consisted of two British and four Indian regiments at full strength, with two machine gun squadrons and 12 guns and the usual Divisional Troops, was easily 'contented', but the troops were indignant at being denied the chance of hitting back effectively. A British officer was killed in the fighting; the Arabs stripped his body naked in the sight of all and left it to be recovered by us. The losses of the Cavalry Division in killed and wounded were 24, and they claimed to have caused five times that number of casualties on the enemy.

It might have been expected that after this signal manifestation of spontaneous and widespread hostility, General Maude would have used his immense preponderance of strength in cavalry, for which at the moment he had little need in other directions, to do as did Gideon in very similar circumstances—to teach these men of Succoth that they could not in future deal thus with the host. There was, indeed, more ample justification for punitive measures than appears from the official narrative. I had it from Leachman, who was among the first to enter Hai, that every second man was wearing British accoutrements and carrying British rifles and ammunition; every house he entered and every shop displayed some trophy from the stricken fields of 1915–16. But General Maude's attention was wholly fixed on the Turks; and an ineffective aeroplane raid on the town of Hai was the only measure of retaliation. The troops of Midian were not subdued, and it was not long before they lifted up their heads again. The military consequences of General Maude's contemptuous disinclination to deal with the Arabs were more serious than appears from the official record: they were to be seen in the large number of troops maintained on the Tigris line of communication until long after the Armistice and in the rapidity with which this area became unmanageable in the summer of 1920. During the progress of the operations dealt with in this chapter, the Arab menace was responsible for immobilizing a whole brigade, apart from troops normally employed in the defence of our lines of communication. Their contempt for us increased as operations progressed. 'The more the forward area became congested with our troops', writes Candler, 'the more the Arabs raided and looted at night, cutting the wire between the blockhouses, evading our bomb traps, and getting off with our rifles, horses and ammunition, generally untouched.'

General Maude's next step was to clear the Hai, or rather the triangle east of the Hai and south of the Tigris. This was undertaken in the same systematic and deliberate fashion as had characterized operations in the Khadhairi bend, and by 6th February was successfully accomplished by the 3rd Corps under General Marshall, consisting of the 13th Division (General Cayley) and 14th Division (General Egerton). The weather, which had so hampered operations during the corresponding period in 1916, was favourable, and visibility uniformly good. We had great numerical superiority in all arms, especially in guns, our fighting strength totalling about 3,500 sabres, 45,000 rifles, and 174 guns as against some 13,200 rifles and 91 guns of the Turks. Victory was not, however, attained without heavy casualties, totalling in all 3,700, bringing our losses since 13th December up to 8,254, including 2,079 killed and missing. Of the Turks we had buried over 2,000 ourselves, and had taken 579 prisoners: their total losses were thus probably in the neighbourhood of 10,000.

It is beyond the scope of this work to relate the steps whereby General Marshall attained his objectives. The operations were notable for the astonishing gallantry displayed by the 36th and 45th Sikhs, two regiments of the 37th Brigade, on 1st February. Both regiments went over the parapet in full strength and both were practically annihilated: of the two battalions only some 190 survived unwounded, including one British and two Indian officers. As the commanding officer of the 1/4th Devons wrote to the Commandant of the 36th Sikhs, they and the 45th had 'set to the brigade an example which its other battalions would find it difficult to live up to'. (The grim significance of the phrase was no doubt unintentional.) Some three weeks later General Maude reviewed the survivors, on their way to 'Amara to reorganize, and expressed his heartfelt admiration of their magnificent fighting qualities: in repeated hand-to-hand conflicts these burly Jāt peasants of the Punjab had proved themselves more than a match for the peasants of Anatolia. The Turkish officers showed initiative and gallantry in counter-attacking: the Indian officers vied with the British in personal leadership in the face of certain death. The records of such deeds by Indian regiments could be multiplied a hundredfold; they are enshrined in the memories, already growing dim, of the few survivors, only a handful of whom are now serving; they are to be found in the ponderous Official Histories of each front; they are, in some cases, described in detail in regimental histories, some of which have been translated into the language of the regiment. But there is no record of the doings of the Indian Army as a whole, though Colonel Yate extorted a promise from the India Office in 1915 that the possibility of compiling such a history would be examined. Those who have at heart the future of India and the fostering of mutual trust between the British and Indian peoples might even now consider whether it could not be done. MacMunn's *Armies of India* is long out of print, and nothing has been written to take its place. The record of India's military achievements during those critical years [1] might help to focus public attention upon an aspect of Indian polity which is apt to be forgotten in the noise and dust of political discussions; these achievements, if only as a guide to future potentialities, can by no means be overlooked.

The reader will pardon this digression, which is prompted not merely by the narrative itself, and by the study of the contemporary documents on which it is based, but by the memory of five years (1903–7) in a Sikh Regiment—the 32nd Pioneers—spent in close contact with the men, under Colonel H. R. Brander, one of the most stimulating and eager-hearted men it has been my privilege to know. So close was the regimental bond of fellowship that when, in 1917, a draft from the 32nd Pioneers chanced to halt in Basra below my office window, I instantly recognized, in the confused hum of conversation, the typical accent of my old comrades, and with mounting pulse dashed out to greet them. It was one of the great moments of my life: the regimental dialect, which I had not spoken or even heard for ten years, came back to me, and with it the name of practically every officer, non-commissioned officer, and man there present who had served in the regiment with me. For a few moments I spoke to them in their own tongue as one possessed: a shout arose from their ranks—'Sat Sri wah Guruji ki fateh! Sat Sriwah Guruji ka Khalsa!'—the Sikh war-cry, followed by the shout—'Come back to us!—Come with us—lead us to victory!' The tears flowed down my cheeks; I fled from them for a time, and later in the day begged my chief to let me return to military duty, for which I was now fit. He decided otherwise, but it was long before there faded from my mind the memory of those moments of exaltation and passionate longing to return to the pit from which I was digged and the rock from which I was hewn.

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[1] The only official publication on the subject is *India's Contribution to the Great War*, published in 1923 by authority of the Government of India, and priced at eight shillings and threepence. It is wholly unworthy of its title, or of the price asked. The speeches of Viceroys are given at interminable length; a record of the many Victoria Crosses won by men of the Indian Army is relegated to an appendix which is a bare list of names.

The day after the clearance of the Hai triangle had been successfully completed, General Maude was informed by Sir William Robertson that the Russians under Generals Baratoff and Chernozuboff, who were in great force in Persia, contemplated an ambitious forward move which, if successful, might reach Mosul, Samarra, and Baghdad; climatic conditions, however, would prevent this movement developing before the middle of April. The news was not unexpected, for General Maude had kept in touch with General Baratoff during the autumn and winter, but it was for the first time definite and accompanied by news of important Russian successes. The possibility of Russian forces occupying Baghdad and even Mosul was not by any means welcome: it would nullify the Sykes-Picot arrangement, and would certainly be exceedingly distasteful to the Arab elements, with whom General Head-quarters, Cairo, was now getting into touch. These considerations played no part in General Maude's strategy, but they probably assisted His Majesty's Government in reaching the decision, a month later, to authorize General Maude to make Baghdad his objective.

The first step was to attack the Turkish position on the right bank of the Tigris in the Dahra bend, just above Kut, where the enemy numbered about 6,500 rifles and 14 guns. The operation was entrusted to the Third Corps under General Marshall, who detailed the 13th Division (General Cayley) to lead off, supported by troops of the 14th Division (General Egerton) on its right. The battle began on the morning of 9th February, in fine weather; the 6th King's Own Lancaster Regiment advanced from their trenches under heavy shell fire, and seized parts of the Turkish front line, to which they held tenaciously in spite of determined counter-attacks and heavy losses. The Worcesters on their left achieved equal success almost without loss, killing many and capturing prisoners and stores. The Cavalry, operating further west against the Shamran position, had been unable to make progress against the Turkish trenches; the terrain could scarcely have been more unfavourable to dismounted cavalry action, being completely devoid of cover for man or beast. Further attacks followed during the next two days. The Turks held on grimly, despite their losses in men and material and their repeated repulses in different sectors on successive days; but the Fates which had been so favourable to them a twelvemonth earlier now no longer smiled on them. The rain they so desired did not fall, and the attacking force was not hampered, as in every battle of 1916, by mud.

On the 12th a fresh and determined assault was made, led by a company of the 102nd Grenadiers, but the carefully laid plan of co-operation between infantry and artillery miscarried and the advance was made without artillery support. The men of the 102nd did not falter, but continued the advance until almost the whole company had been shot down. Five of them reached their objective, but only two lived to tell the tale. Of their seven British and Indian officers not one survived unwounded, and of 136 men all but 37 were casualties; only less severe were the losses borne by the rest of the battalion, who, undeterred by the fate of their comrades, assaulted the Turkish position and carried it. They were reinforced by a company of the 37th Dogras,[1] who pushed forward with great dash and gallantry, losing 5 officers and 104 men.

On the 15th, after a last-minute postponement of twenty-four hours, under General Maude's instructions, to allow of more thorough preparation of the assembly trenches, the final attack was made. The first advance was made by a company of the 6th Loyal North Lancashire: it was followed, in other parts of the line, by the 8th Royal Welch Fusiliers and the 6th South Wales Borderers, supported by the 8th Cheshires, these battalions for the first time in history maintaining on the field of battle the contiguity indicated by their territorial designations. Soon after midday an advance was made by troops of the 14th Division, including the 2/4th Gurkhas, 1/5th Buffs, and 37th Dogras. Just before dusk the rain began to fall, too late to save the Turks. Our casualties during the day totalled 500: the Turkish losses were crushing—250 of their dead were left on the field; we took 2,000 prisoners, 2,500 rifles, and quantities of military stores. The enemy's power of resistance had been decisively broken. The right bank of the Tigris was now entirely in our hands. An unfordable stream in flood, running at 6 miles an hour, separated us from the rest of the Turkish force, distributed between Shamran, 8 miles west of Kut, and Sannaiyat, where they were closely held by the 1st Corps under General Cobbe.

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[1] The name is really geographical and not racial. Dogras are people who come from the hills between the Punjab and Kashmir, of the old Aryan Hindu stock and affiliated races who peopled the bulk of India. They are Brahmans, Hindus, Jats, and the like, who refused the Koran and the Prophet when many of the other Rajputs succumbed (MacMunn).

General Maude had good reason to be satisfied with the conduct of his men, and he issued an Order of the Day conveying his warmest thanks and congratulations 'to the regimental officers, non-commissioned officers and men, for their matchless heroism and fighting spirit'. 'The end', he concluded, 'is not yet, but with such absolute co-operation and vigour animating all, continuance of our success is assured.'

The Turkish force under Qarabekir Bey now had an effective strength of about 10,000, opposed to about seven times that number under General Maude. The Turks were short of gun ammunition, and some of their fuses were bad. Desertion was prevalent. Khalil Pasha realized too late the menace to which the Corps on the Tigris was exposed: he clung to his scheme for sending a force through Persia to cut the British line of communication; he could not obtain reinforcements in time from elsewhere. He had not even prepared defensive positions between Kut and Baghdad as his prudent predecessor Nur-ud-Din Bey had done.

Precisely how, where, and when to cross the Tigris was the problem that confronted General Maude: success depended upon the possibility of surprise, and upon adequate preparation by the units detailed for this most difficult of military operations. No pains were spared to ensure adequate training:[1] 800 volunteer rowers were collected and trained on the Hai, and every detail worked out thoroughly in advance, with the precision of a military pageant at Olympia. More volunteers, however, were needed owing to the heavy casualties sustained, and were obtained from the 13th Division. The element of surprise was ensured by daily bombardments and by a sustained attack on the Sannaiyat position on the 22nd February by the 7th Division, to which reference is made elsewhere. A raid was also made on Maqasis after dark on the evening preceding the real affair. A party of 100 men of the 27th Punjabis under Captain Pitman with rowers from No. 1 Bridging Train, crossed unobserved, in pontoons manned by rowers drawn in equal numbers from the 34th Sikh Pioneers and the 21st Sapper Company, raided Turkish trenches, and returned with prisoners and machine guns, almost without loss. Higher up the Tigris, opposite Kut, another feint was arranged.[1] These moves had the desired effect: the Turks concluded that the Maqasis affair was a hoax and that the splashing of planks and movement of transport carts opposite Kut (near the Liquorice Factory) showed where the danger lay. Before dawn on the 23rd detachments of the 1st Norfolks, led by 2nd Lieutenant B. F. Hornor,[2] got across the river in pontoons unobserved and seized a portion of the river bank. A little lower down a detachment of the 2/9th Gurkhas crossed. Of 13 pontoons 10 got across successfully, but of these 4 were sunk or disabled on the way back. The six surviving pontoons essayed a second trip, but every occupant was killed or wounded before they reached midstream. The 1/2nd Gurkhas, who were detailed to the third ferry, met with the same fate.

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[1] For details of the organization see Dewing, Witts.

Thanks to the original success of the leading detachment, No. 1 ferry was little interfered with by Turkish fire, and by 9.30 a.m. the whole battalion was across. The leading detachment of the 2/9th Gurkhas, led by Major G. C. Wheeler,[3] showed no less gallantry and enterprise: they seized a Turkish trench 150 yards inland and held their ground. At No. 3 ferry all the 13 pontoons successfully made one journey, the rowers being drawn from the 1/4th Hampshires, who contributed 98 out of the 200 casualties, and obtained six immediate awards for conspicuous bravery. The leading parties of the 1/2nd Gurkhas under Lieutenant Toogood secured a footing after a hand-to-hand fight with a Turkish picket, but for along time they had to hold on without reinforcement. At 6.30 a.m. the Bridging Train under Captain Witts arrived, and the building of the bridge commenced. Two hours later two motor boats were launched; work on the bridge continued, not without heavy casualties, till about 11.30, by which time the left bank had been cleared by the troops who had crossed at No. 1 ferry. Meanwhile, more troops were crossing by pontoon at the rate of 200 men an hour. By 2.0 p.m. the 2/9th and 1/2nd Gurkhas were across, and joined the Norfolks in forcing back the Turks, who began to surrender in considerable numbers. An hour later the 67th Punjabis crossed. By 4.30 p.m. the bridge, 300 yards in length, was complete. It had been built in 8 hours, a fine performance. The casualties incurred in the crossing numbered 350, of whom some 200 were volunteer oarsmen. The Turkish casualties are unknown, but they left 540 prisoners in our hands, and 5 machine guns.

It remains to refer to the operations at Sannaiyat, where, thanks to

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[1] See also Tennant, Candler.

[2] For this day's work he was awarded the D.S.O.

[3] For conspicuous gallantry in this operation he was awarded the V.C. The announcement in the *London Gazette* (8th June 1917) contains nothing to show that the deed was done in Mesopotamia. No other theatre of war was so treated.

General Maude's strategy, the main Turkish strength was concentrated. The First Corps on the left bank of the Tigris opposite Sannaiyat had already, on 17th February, made one unsuccessful attack on the Turkish position, which was held by 3,000 Turks and 19 guns. This failure confirmed Khalil Pasha's conviction as to the stability of the Tigris front, and caused Qarabekir Bey to reinforce his left wing at Sannaiyat.

This action was followed up, on 22nd February, by a further attack which preceded the attempted crossing at Shamran. It was carried out with the greatest vigour and determination, led by the Seaforths and the 92nd Punjabis, who ten months before had led the attack on the same position, and had failed only owing to lack of support. The Turks counter-attacked boldly on no less than seven occasions, driving the 92nd Punjabis out of the trenches they had captured, but the Seaforths held their ground, and took over the trenches vacated by the 92nd: they were supported by the Black Watch. During the afternoon, under cover of an intense bombardment, a fresh attack was made by the 53rd and 51st Sikhs, who suffered heavy losses but supported by the 2nd Leicesters and the 56th Rifles, and steadied by the ever-resolute Seaforths, they quickly rallied, and by dusk the position was secure. The day's work had cost the 7th Division over thirteen hundred casualties, but all units engaged had shown fine fighting spirit and were rejoicing in the prospect of advancing beyond the trenches which had been occupied by the 7th Division since April 1916. The success was followed up that night by a carefully staged raid across the river by a hundred men of the 27th Punjabis, to which reference has already been made. The night was bitterly cold and the wearied battalions of the 7th Division found it impossible to sleep: the majority, indeed, were engaged in digging trenches and in active patrolling.

The crossing of the Tigris having been successfully accomplished, as already narrated, soon after dawn on the 23rd February, it was an essential part of General Maude's scheme that the First Corps, under General Cobbe, consisting of the 3rd Division (General Keary) and the 7th Division (General Fane), should exploit the victory to the fullest extent. The execution of the forward movement was again entrusted to the 7th Division, who had effectively consolidated the ground they had gained during the previous day, but the result was disappointing, though a forward movement initiated before dawn on the 24th reached the enemy's sixth line almost without opposition.

At 7.30 a.m. General Maude, quoting an aeroplane report of considerable enemy movement westward, instructed the First Corps to press on 'vigorously': these orders were passed on to General Fane, who continued to advance with the greatest caution and deliberation. Soon after 8.30 a.m., after the 3rd Corps had gained the Dahra ridge, General Maude ordered the First Corps to press on 'with extreme vigour', as there could not be many enemy troops in front of Sannaiyat.

A considerable advance was in fact made, but was soon checked: to quote the *Official History*, 'the Commander of the 7th Division felt that an orderly advance was necessary to ensure that his brigades kept in touch with one another, and also that the ground to his front, between each captured line and the next one, was covered by patrols pushed well ahead before the main advance was begun'.

At 3 p.m. General Maude again urged the First Corps to push on as briskly as possible, but without result. At 5 p.m. General Cobbe visited General Fane and, in the words of the *Official History*, 'discussed the situation'. Only an hour of daylight remained and no substantial advance seemed feasible. The slowness of the 7th Division to move forward is difficult to understand. The divisional commander had two fresh Brigades in hand, viz. the 21st Brigade and the 8th of the 3rd Division, which had been placed under his orders. By the evening of the 22nd the 7th Division was in possession of the first two enemy lines. Not until 5.30 p.m. on the 23rd did it occupy the 3rd and 4th lines, and although it had only one line of the enemy still to its front, and the 14th Division was crossing uninterruptedly at Shamran, the 5th line was not occupied till the Turks had evacuated it. The 7th Division's casualties for the day totalled 29, and they captured 63 prisoners. The action of the Cavalry Division during the engagement and subsequent pursuit is equally inexplicable. They began to cross the bridge soon after 9 a.m. on the 24th, yet it was not till after 11 a.m. that they commenced passing through the 14th Division two miles to the north of the bridge. The Turks were thereafter passing across their front at a distance of only two or three miles, at times actually within sight, but they made no attempt to get round the Turkish left flank. As soon as they were clear of the Infantry, both brigades wheeled to the left, dismounted, and so remained until the end of the day, heavily engaged, if their War Diaries are to be literally understood, with the enemy rear-guard. Their total casualties during the day are given as two killed and six wounded. Boldly handled, their action might have been decisive. General Maude's instructions that the G.O.C. was to report to him by wireless at hourly intervals clearly precluded speedy movement or a bold advance, if literally interpreted, for to set up and dismantle a wireless set takes twenty-five minutes. No attempt appears, however, to have been made to induce General Maude to modify these orders, and, as at Dujaila in the previous year, the importance of obeying orders to the letter was regarded as of paramount importance, regardless of new conditions, notwithstanding the provisions of Field Service Regulations.

The failure of both the Cavalry Division at Shamran and the 7th Division at Sannaiyat to act with the maximum vigour had far-reaching results; but such was the confusion into which the Turks were thrown by the successful crossing at Shamran, and so heavy had been the losses already incurred by them, that victory, though incomplete, was assured. At Sannaiyat the 1st Corps captured 70 and counted 640 dead; the enemy's total losses on the front can scarcely have been less than 1,400, and the 3rd Corps killed and captured some 1,600 at Shamran, making a total of 3,000. They had already lost 2,250 in the Dahra Bend operations, and 400 at Sannaiyat on 17th February. Of the 9,200 men of the 18th Turkish Corps, it is unlikely that more than 6,200 started the retreat to Baghdad. Had the Cavalry Divisions and the 7th Division been well led we should have destroyed the 18th Corps as completely as Allenby destroyed the Turkish Palestine Army eighteen months later. Our losses totalled 2,750, of which 1,350 belonged to the 1st Corps and 1,400 to the 3rd Corps. Our strength, thanks to steady reinforcements, remained at about 46,000 rifles and sabres, and 174 guns.

The Naval Flotilla under Captain Nunn, R.N., passed through the bridge during the day, and by the evening of the 24th *Mantis*, *Tarantula*, *Moth*, *Butterfly*, *Gadfly*, and *Snakefly* anchored off Kut; the town was found deserted next morning, and after hoisting the Union Jack, with agreeable sentimentality, over the ruins, the Flotilla proceeded some way up-stream. It was not until the 26th, however, that they received definite authority for a vigorous pursuit. Their day had at last come and good use they made of it. Some way beyond Baghaila they came under fire from the 4-inch gun of the *Firefly*, which had been captured in December 1916, and from the armed launch *Pioneer*. The *Tarantula* with Captain Nunn on board led the Flotilla: at Nahr al Kalak he came in touch with the Turkish rearguard, entrenched at the apex of the hairpin turn which the river makes at this point. The channel was unknown and narrow: every ship of the Flotilla would be under continuous gun, machine gun, and rifle fire at ranges of from 100 to 500 yards from three directions for some 5 miles: the risk of going aground was great, and there was also the possibility of blocking the fairway. Captain Nunn did not hesitate but drove ahead, coming under heavy fire to which each ship was able to respond with all her armament. Regarded as a naval engagement, it was an encounter almost unique in the annals of war, though it had certain features in common with the naval engagement which preceded the capture of Mohammerah in 1856.[1] The flotilla suffered heavy losses in personnel, the *Moth*, which was last in the line, being holed below the water-line and hit eight times by shell, one of which pierced her boilers; but her Commander, Lt.-Com. Cartwright, kept her going, though four out of her five officers and half her remaining complement were killed or wounded.[2] The *Mantis* (Commander Bernard Buxton, R.N.) also had a heavy casualty list; the quartermaster and pilot were killed in the conning-tower and she was only saved from running ashore by the prompt action of the Captain—who was himself already severely wounded.

Having passed the Turkish rear-guard, the ships overtook the enemy's main body and opened a rapid fire on it with every available weapon, shooting down many gun teams, the guns later falling into our hands. 'The courageous attack of the British Naval forces', says Muhammad Amin, 'played havoc with the rear of the Corps.' Such was the demoralization of the Turks that they scarcely attempted to reply. Pushing on, the Flotilla secured the surrender of the armed tug *Sumana* which had been unwisely retained intact at Kut by General Townshend. The *Firefly* after keeping up a heavy cannonade was set on fire and run ashore. A prize crew, promptly sent, put out the fire before it could reach the magazine and hoisted the white ensign only a few miles above the point where she had been lost fifteen months earlier. The vessel was taken over shortly after by Lt.-Cmdr. Eddis, R.N., who had charge of her at Ctesiphon in November 1915.

The steamer *Basra*, with several hundred enemy casualties and a few of our own wounded who had been taken prisoner in the recent fighting, was next captured. 'She was packed with wounded Turks', wrote Tennant of her the next day: 'one could almost scent her coming: almost to a man their wounds had turned to gangrene'. The *Pioneer* and several abandoned barges full of munitions were passed. Darkness fell and Captain Nunn anchored for the night, far ahead of our troops, and almost within range of the Turkish main body. Never were courage and enterprise more amply rewarded. The orderly retreat of the Turks became a rout, and the aeroplanes next day saw, to quote Tennant (p. 89), 'a spectacle amazing and horrible; dead bodies and mules, abandoned guns, waggons and stores littered the road, many of the waggons had hoisted the white flag, men and animals, exhausted and starving, lay prone on the ground. Few of these, if any, survived the attentions of the Arab tribesmen, hanging round like wolves on their trail. . . . I turned home sickened.'

The airmen, too, had done much to harry the retreating army, flying low and mowing down group after group of men with their

[1] See Hunt.

[2] See Cato, Corbett.

machine guns. The Cavalry, hampered by lack of supplies, and scarcely more rapid in their movements than the Infantry, contributed but little, and the Turkish military historian Muhammad Amin criticises sharply the lack of enterprise in the pursuit. It seems clear, however, that General Maude himself was primarily responsible for their attitude: not only did he not encourage adventures, he prohibited them. Of their 91 guns, only 28 were withdrawn by the Turks; the rest were abandoned. We took during the operations some 7,000 prisoners; not more than 5,000 remained of the Turkish Force on the Tigris. General Maude may well have felt that further risks were uncalled for.

We must retrace our steps to follow the course of the main force, which was now firmly astride the Tigris. On 25th February it became known that the enemy was retiring on Imam Mahdi, some twenty miles up-stream of Kut on the left bank. Pursuit was ordered, and the 13th Division, passing through the 14th, led the advance on the left bank and got into somewhat ineffective touch during the day with the Turks, numbering some 2,000 with 23 guns, who fought a stubborn rear-guard action, leaving some 300 dead and 340 prisoners, and inflicting on us some 450 casualties.[1] On the 26th the 3rd Corps were opposite Baghaila. Behind the 13th was the 14th Division, while the 1st Corps brought up the rear and cleared up the battle-field. The Cavalry Division reached the Nahr al Kalak bend nearly eighteen miles up-stream from Baghaila in a straight line, but during the night again lost touch with the enemy. On the 27th they pushed on to ʿAziziya, but finding it held by 2,000 Infantry and 10 guns retired; when they returned next day they found it unoccupied. By this time the supply situation was bad. The 7th Division had eaten their emergency ration: there was neither straw nor barley for the animals, and ʿAziziya had apparently been denuded of supplies by the Turks. On the 1st March, however, the Cavalry were able to occupy the place; the gunboats, too, arrived and a four days' halt followed.

General Maude now had to consider whether he would exploit to the full his victory, which had been unexpectedly complete. He had been privately told by Sir William Robertson that he was expected to do so. To advance at once, as he earnestly desired, would be to jeopardize the continuity of his supply services, which were already overstrained. The Advance Base was, at this date, still at Shaikh Saʿad, 144 miles by river from ʿAziziya, and 255 miles from Baghdad; the great depots on the Hai were no longer of any use and would have to be sent back by the light railway to Shaikh Saʿad, for onward dispatch. The Inspector-General of Communications, who had received no warning that an advance towards Baghdad was imminent, pressed strongly for a week's respite, during which the steamer service could be reorganized. To this General Maude agreed, and having established his advance headquarters at ʿAziziya proceeded to mature his plans for a further advance.

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[1] On this subject see Marshall.

Meanwhile, in London, the situation created by General Maude's successes had been considered by the War Cabinet. On 28th February Sir William Robertson was authorized to announce that it was the policy of his Majesty's Government to establish British influence in the Baghdad wilayat, and that General Maude was required, subject to the security of his force and the capacity of his communications, to exploit his success to the fullest extent, on the understanding that he should in no case place himself in a position from which he might afterwards have to retire. Joint action with the Russian Forces in Persia was advised, and it was suggested that a forward move should be deferred 'until we see definitely what the Russians can do'; but General Maude was asked to remember that it was undesirable for the Russians to reach Baghdad before us. These instructions crossed a telegram from Sir Charles Monro, the Commander-in-Chief in India, sent after a special meeting of the Governor-General's Executive Council, emphasizing the importance of the capture of Baghdad both on political and military grounds, and suggesting that if Baghdad was captured, India might, on a reconsideration of her military position, be able to release further troops from elsewhere. General Monro suggested that the troops, railway material, and resources then being sent from India to Egypt might be better employed in Mesopotamia, a course which would enable us to join hands with the Russians during the summer.

On 3rd March, Sir William Robertson telegraphed to General Maude: 'Telegrams received from you show that the defeat of the Turks is more complete than I had reason to suppose. In consequence the feasibility of occupying Baghdad at once is probably greater than I had supposed. I hope therefore that you understand that my telegram of February 28th left matters to your own judgment....'

The announcement of 28th February that it was the policy of his Majesty's Government to establish British influence in the Baghdad wilayat was not unexpected by General Maude, nor by his Chief Political Officer: it seemed to those on the spot unthinkable that we should fail to grasp a prize so great, which would win us such prestige throughout the East. It is clear from Sir William Robertson's telegrams that, at the moment when the decision was taken, great importance was attached to co-operation with the Russian Forces in Persia. Of the coming *débâcle* in that quarter no suspicions were as yet entertained. It is equally clear that the Government of India entertained expectations of the moral effect of the capture of Baghdad that subsequent events showed to be exaggerated. Sir William Robertson in his book is silent as to the considerations which led him to advocate a forward move, nor does Repington's encyclopaedia of current gossip throw any light on the subject. On the Suez Canal front we had completed the railway to Al ʿArish and cleared the Sinai province of Turkish troops: our forces there were not seriously menaced, nor would any strategical object be served by a further advance.

On the other hand it was already clear to General Maude that in order to hold Baghdad he would be obliged to occupy strongly positions on the Diyala, Tigris, and Euphrates, at a distance in each case of about sixty miles from Baghdad. This would mean a very great extension of his lines of communication and the employment of many more troops than he possessed.

It would involve, too, an increasing drain on ocean shipping, which was desperately needed elsewhere: we were already dealing at Basra with one hundred thousand tons of stores a month. It would involve a great increase of river transport and of railway material. The bulk of the former would have to come from the United Kingdom, of the latter from India, where existing railways would have to be pulled up for the purpose. The only strategic ground on which the decision to advance could be justified was that it would cause the Turks to concentrate against us a force at least as great; the only administrative ground, that the men required would for the most part be drawn from India, and would be of categories that could not be utilized to advantage on other fronts. In point of fact, the advance had no such strategic result. The Turks never kept more than 50,000 men in the field against us: our ration strength in November 1918 was nearly ten times as great. The administrative pressure that had to be applied in India in order to supply the necessary drafts to the fighting and auxiliary forces had serious political reactions and was responsible in some measure for the disturbances in the Punjab and the difficulties which attended the prosecution of the Afghan War of 1919.

It seems clear that in deciding on the establishment of British influence in the Baghdad wilayat, an objective far more extensive than the occupation of the city itself, the Cabinet not only desired a spectacular success but also looked for extensive territorial gains. The decision connoted, at that time, the addition to British spheres of influence in Asia of an area of not less than 75,000 square miles or including the Basra wilayat of over 100,000 square miles[1] with a population in the Baghdad wilayat of nearly 1½ millions, in Basra of over ¾ million. Voluntarily to assume responsibilities for vast territories so situated is foreign to all the traditions of British Governments. It formed no part of our original war aims; it must have been clear, even then, that a wedge of British protected territory thrust into the Middle East would constitute a heavy liability. One can only conclude that the members of the Cabinet, so far as they considered the matter in its wider bearings at all, felt bound to do their best to implement the ambitious schemes implicit in the Sykes-Picot agreement. They may have felt that possession of Baghdad by Russia would be an even greater danger to the stability of British possessions in Asia and of the peace of the world. Nor have we, in 1930, any reason to disagree. I am personally convinced that the decision to occupy the Baghdad wilayat was not only wise but was, in all the circumstances, the only decision that could be taken in justice to our Allies and to ourselves.

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[1] *Note on the area of ʿIraq.* The areas of the three wilayats cannot be accurately ascertained, as the wilayats have for administrative purposes ceased to exist. Following the old boundaries they are approximately as follows: Basra wilayat 25,542 square miles,

For whatever reasons taken, the fateful decision, once announced, was irrevocable: less than a fortnight later Baghdad was in our hands.

Baghdad wilayat 77,292 square miles, Mosul wilayat 29,370 square miles, and the corridor to Palestine and Syria across the Great Desert 41,739 square miles: total 173, 943 square miles. The area of 'Iraq is stated in the Revenue Report of 1919 as 116,511 square miles, and this is inferentially repeated in the Report of 1923 to the League of Nations. The 1924 edition of the *Encyc. Brit.* gives 143,250 square miles: since then, however, the 'corridor' has been added.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAPTURE OF BAGHDAD AND SUBSEQUENT OPERATIONS[1]

> 'By a single stroke, or series of strokes, General Maude may be said to have altered the history of the world. It is surely inconceivable that the inhabitants of those fair regions can ever be thrust back into the servitude from which he and his forces succeeded in emancipating them.' LORD CURZON, *in the House of Lords, Nov.* 1917.

13th Hussars at Zor. Crossing of Diyala River. Operations on right bank. Plight of Turks. Occupation of Baghdad. Order restored. Turkish wounded abandoned. Attitude of citizens of Baghdad. General Maude's proclamation. Its reception in Baghdad and in Parliament. Military Governors appointed. General Maude's attitude towards civil administration. Advance to Euphrates. Protection against flood. Progress on Tigris. Fighting on Diyala. Battle of Jabal Hamrin. Battle of Istabulat. Occupation of Samarra. Battle of Band-i-ʿAdhaim. The Auxiliary Services. Royal Flying Corps. General Maude's achievement.

AFTER a halt of five days, none too long for General Maude's tired but happy warriors, and all too short for the exhausted remnants of Khalil Pasha's army, the advance began again. General Marshall's column reached Zor unopposed on 5th March, after a long march of eighteen miles. The cavalry, pushing on seven miles farther towards Lajj in a heavy dust-storm, came under shell-fire. Soon afterwards Colonel Richardson, commanding the 13th Hussars, seeing what appeared to be an enemy convoy a mile to the northward, extended his four squadrons and moved forward; only when they were within a hundred yards of the Turks did they discern, through the dust, a line of trenches, from which a heavy fire was directed on them. Colonel Richardson gave the signal to extend and charge. His men swept over the Turkish infantry, sabring and capturing about fifty of them, only to come under intense rifle and machine-gun fire from a second line of trenches a few hundred yards ahead. A few of his men reached this line, but were all killed or captured. The rest were skilfully extricated, dismounted and again advanced, but their numbers had been reduced to sixty and they could make no progress.

To the left of the Hussars the 13th Lancers continued their dismounted advance till checked by a Turkish trench system, strongly held. The rest of the cavalry now came up, and 'S' and 'V' Batteries of the R.H.A. came into action; the latter came under heavy fire—

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[1] References: *Official History*, *Critical Study*, Callwell, Corbett, Durand, Egan, Lawley, Marshall.

one gun was disabled by a direct hit—and suffered many casualties. No further progress could be made, and after dark the division withdrew to the river; it had captured 35 Turks, and had sustained 130 casualties, of which 86 were from the 13th Hussars, including 9 officers. Three officers and 25 other ranks were killed, including Captain Eve (son of Mr. Justice Eve), who fell sword in hand among the Turkish Infantry. The charge was a gallant piece of work, which deserves no less immortality than the famous charge of the Light Brigade, in which the 13th Hussars took part. Indeed their losses at Lajj were greater than at Balaclava, mainly owing to the fact that the Turks murdered a number of the wounded as they lay helpless.[1] Two of the officers wounded in the charge, Lieutenant Guy Pedder and Captain H. C. D. Fitzgibbon, M.C.,[2] afterwards joined the Civil Administration, as also did Captain C. H. Gowan, M.C., of the same Regiment. All did well in various capacities, and Gowan was in 1930 still serving in ʿIraq. He had a magnificent record in France for daring and had been discharged in 1915 from the Canadian Army as unfit for further service. The Turks likewise withdrew, and dawn on 6th March found them entrenched behind the Diyala on the left bank of the Tigris, and on the right bank in a hastily constructed position from the bank of the Tigris at Karrada to the borders of the ʿAqarquf inundation just in front of the line prepared against General Townshend's coming in 1915.

General Maude had been led to believe, from aeroplane and other reports, that the Turks did not intend to make a serious stand on the Diyala, and he accordingly ordered the 3rd Corps to secure a crossing over the river on the following day. General Marshall, after a personal reconnaissance, reported during the afternoon that the Turks seemed to be in some strength along the lower reaches, and had at least seven guns there, with which our own R.H.A. battery with the Cavalry Division had been heard in action further to the north. A close reconnaissance of the river-line would, however, be impossible till nightfall. He arranged to send across the Tigris three miles below the mouth of the Diyala, under command of General Thomson, an infantry brigade, a field battery, and a sapper company (all from the 14th Division), to turn the Diyala line. The force was ferried across in a paddle steamer, the process taking about nine hours; by daybreak they had reached a point on the Tigris bank some four miles south-west of the mouth of the Diyala, whence our troops on the south bank of the Diyala could be seen. They were supported by artillery fire to the utmost that could be afforded, but were left in ignorance of the plans of the 13th Division. The attempt to cross was pressed forward with a speed which contrasts strangely with the deliberate methods employed with such success at Shamran. The operation was entrusted to General O'Dowda, who had at his disposal for the purpose the 38th Infantry Brigade, the 8th Welch Pioneers, the 71st and 72nd Companies R.E., a detachment of No. 2 Bridging Train, and ample artillery. A personal reconnaissance by the commander of the bridging detachment showed that the only place where pontoons could be launched was one of the existing bridge ramps at the village close to the mouth. The river was about 120 yards wide, the current was slow, the banks everywhere very steep and 20 feet high. The first step was to occupy the portion of the village on the left bank: this was done at 11 p.m. by the 6th King's Own, though the enemy on the opposite bank were watchful and opened fire. The night was clear and calm, and the moon shone brightly; the pontoons had to be man-handled for a considerable distance. As soon as an attempt was made to launch the first, so many men were hit that proceedings were checked. For the next attempt all four pontoons were gradually got forward, ready to launch quickly. An artillery barrage was then put down—but owing to inadequate reconnaissance it proved ineffective. Scarcely had the pontoons left the bank than all the men in them were hit and the pontoons themselves swept by the slow current into the Tigris. The remaining pontoon was not launched. The first attempt had failed, and it had been shown, at a cost of sixty-four casualties, that further reconnaissance and preparation were essential to effect a successful crossing.

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[1] Durand, p. 188.

[2] He was killed on duty in Kurdistan on 13th January 1922.

The second attempt was made the following night (8th/9th March) by the same Brigade, when the first crossing was entrusted to men all drawn from Lancashire Regiments. The 8th Welch Pioneers and the 72nd Company R.E. also took part. The attack was made at midnight, at four points, by four separate columns *lettered* A, B, C, and D, each with one pontoon. A heavy bombardment preceded the attack, and was of some assistance to the columns, for the dust raised acted as a smoke-screen. Had it been maintained, the attempt might have been more successful. No sooner, however, was it raised, than all that our troops were doing became visible in the clear moonlit night. 'A' column's pontoon made one, 'B' made four, and 'C' six trips across the river before its pontoons were sunk. 'D' column's pontoon could not be launched owing to the steepness of the banks. There were no more pontoons at hand, and when six arrived after a lapse of an hour and a half two were destroyed by Turkish fire, directed on them by the light of continuous star-shells.

The one hundred men in all who crossed were spread along the opposite bank over a distance of some three hundred yards and were exposed to heavy fire, and a series of determined counter-attacks.

The survivors of the three columns, numbering not more than forty in all, were collected by Captain A. O. Reid, of the King's Regiment, who afterwards received the Victoria Cross,[1] and withdrawn downstream to a small bend in the river, where they beat off a succession of attacks which continued until daybreak. The Turks lost many officers and hundreds of men, whilst our losses throughout the night totalled about 140.

The second attack had thus for practical purposes failed, notwithstanding the supreme gallantry displayed by the troops. Nor should this be a matter for surprise. To quote Major Dewing:

> 'Preparation there was none; there could be none. There was no time to do more than find a spot where it would be possible to get pontoons down to the water, for the high banks made this an impossible operation in most places.
>
> 'Surprise there was none; there could be none. A pursuing force had come up with a retreating enemy. A river barred the way. There was no need to be a Moltke to arrive at the probability of an attempt to cross. The track by which the pursuing force had been advancing led straight on to the site from which the Turkish bridge had just been taken away. There the steep banks were conveniently ramped; it was inevitable that the Turks should be on the look-out at that point, if they were going to watch the river at all. It was at that point the attempt was made.
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> 'At Husaini an attempt was made relying on surprise alone, without preparation; at Shamran there was both preparation and surprise; at the Diyala there was neither preparation nor surprise, only gallantry. Gallantry there was in plenty; but gallantry alone cannot effect a crossing in face of opposition. . . . No matter what the gallantry of the troops, the chances of success of an unprepared crossing which does not achieve surprise are very small indeed.'

But progress had nevertheless been made: the 44th (Turkish) Regiment had lost all their officers and 1,000 men; their morale was gone. Only one battalion of the 3rd Regiment was left to guard the crossing. The remainder of the 14th Division was engaged in preparing a position to the rear.

A third attempt to cross the Diyala was made on the night of 9th/10th March, and was immediately successful. Little or no opposition was encountered, there were few casualties; Captain Reid's detachment, which had practically exhausted its ammunition, was relieved and some two hundred prisoners were taken. A pontoon bridge was thrown across the Diyala by midday and the 13th Division were all across by nightfall, and in touch with the Turks entrenched on a line running from the Tigris at Qarara to Tel Muhammad, a small mound some three miles north-north-east of Qarara. The total strength of the Turks on the right bank was some 300 sabres, 18 guns, and 3,700 rifles. Their flank was in the air and it was clear to them that Baghdad was already open to their enemies. There was still, however, so far as General Maude knew, some possibility of Turkish reinforcements arriving from Hamadan via Baquba, and probably for this reason he decided to make his main effort on the right bank. West of the Tigris the 7th Division with the Cavalry Division on their left were instructed to push on to the railway station and endeavour to encircle the city from the north-west. These operations did not, however, succeed on the lines desired by General Maude.

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[1] 'By his dauntless courage and gallant leadership he was able to consolidate a small post with the advanced troops, on the opposite side of a river to the main body, after his line of communications had been cut by the sinking of the pontoons.

'He maintained this position for thirty hours against constant attacks by bombs, machine-gun and shell fire, with the full knowledge that repeated attempts at relief had failed, and that his ammunition was all but exhausted. It was greatly due to his tenacity that the passage of the river was effected on the following night.

'During the operations he was wounded.—*London Gazette*, 8th June 1917.'

The Cavalry Division again failed to make their weight felt, and lost their way during the night in the maze of narrow, deep canals which intersected the fields on this bank. They had little influence on the day's operations. On the following day (10th March) a violent gale sprang up at about 9 a.m., enveloping friend and foe in clouds of dust so thick that operations perforce ceased. Some Brigades were waterless, and in the storm their transport went astray; communications were interrupted, and touch was lost even between adjacent units. General Maude, whose head-quarters were on a paddle-steamer in the river near Bawi, found it difficult to ascertain what the situation really was and why a further advance had not been made.

The enemy, however, were in far worse case. Khalil Pasha had been unable to withdraw troops from Persia, where the 13th Corps was snowed up; he had failed to prepare entrenched positions between Kut and Baghdad, on which to fall back, and had even neglected to maintain those prepared by his predecessor Nur-ud-Din. From available Turkish sources it is clear that he lost his head, sending contradictory orders to his subordinates. Three days after we crossed the Tigris at Shamran, he had withdrawn his head-quarters to Baghdad and announced his intention of retiring to Samarra. Twenty-four hours later he directed Qarabekir Bey to oppose us at ʿAziziya. Only as an afterthought, consequent on our five days' pause at ʿAziziya,. did he decide to defend Baghdad; nor, when he had reached this decision, did he make the most of inundations, though the height of both the Tigris and Diyala made it possible to flood extensive areas on both banks. It would have taken a week to make the inundations effective, but had he started immediately after the defeat at the Dahra bend much could have been done in this direction. The Turkish force could not, however, in any event have long withstood the superior strength and armament of the British forces. It consisted on 10th March, according to Turkish accounts, of 500 sabres, 9,000 rifles, and 48 guns (though British estimates are higher by 50 per cent.). General Maude's force consisted of nearly 4,000 sabres, 42,000 rifles, and 174 guns, and was supported by troops on lines of communication, drafts, and followers so numerous as to bring the total ration strength on that day to the figure of 275,000, equivalent to about five times its effective fighting strength. Nevertheless, Qarabekir Bey, in spite of the failing morale of his men, contrived to withdraw during the night of 10th/11th March with little loss. The bridges across the Tigris on which he relied had been broken by the gale, and he could no longer reinforce his left flank, round which we were working. Immediate retreat alone could save the situation, and at 8 p.m. he prevailed upon Khalil Pasha to consent. All that night, under cover of the storm that raged without intermission, the destruction of military stores proceeded. The work was well done. Every railway engine on the Baghdad–Samarra section of the 'Baghdad–Bahn' was scientifically destroyed. Seven new aeroplanes which had just arrived were burned, together with all 'consumable' stores. Disorganized, defeated, without communications, and almost without transport, surrounded by hostile Arabs, and short of gun and rifle ammunition, the Turks contrived to hold up our advance for four days and finally to escape, despite the darkness and the violence of the storm, from a force about five times as strong, and to leave behind them little of military value.

They retired unmolested except by Arabs, of whom they captured and shot eighteen. 'A small force of cavalry', writes Muhammad ʿAmin, 'or a brave and resolute detachment, would have created havoc in our desperate situation, which was due to faulty arrangements. Most fortunately the attackers were entirely unaware of what was happening and . . . were trying to recuperate afar off from the fatigues of the last forty-eight hours.'

Our infantry were not slow to discover that the Turkish trenches in front of them had been vacated, and by 2 a.m. the enemy's positions on both banks were in our hands. Baghdad railway station was occupied at dawn. The gunboats, which for some unexplained reason had not been permitted to play their usual role, left Bawi at 8.30 and reached Baghdad at 3.30, accompanying General Maude in a paddle-steamer, the *P. 53*. The cavalry, with horses and men tired out by their operations of the previous few days, operations that had borne but little fruit, pushed slowly forward to Kadhimain, taking 100 prisoners who were in the town.[1] They sent forward patrols, but found no enemy:

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[1] *The Cavalry Journal*, April 1927, contains a complacent account of the leisurely progress of this column.

once again they were too late. The 13th Division on the left bank started to advance on Baghdad at 6.30, but were instructed not to enter the city. This privilege was entrusted by General Maude to the 35th Brigade on the right bank, in order to emphasize his instructions to 1st Corps and the Cavalry Division to advance *beyond* Baghdad. But the bridge had been broken, as was indeed to be expected, and there was some delay in getting boatmen or river craft for the crossing, and in the meantime Arabs and Kurds were busily engaged in pillage. The 13th Division were therefore obliged, despite General Maude's instructions, to send some troops, including some men of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, into the city to restore order. They were relieved by General Thomson's Brigade (the 35th) during the afternoon.[1] The Union Jack, which had first been raised by an officer of the 1/5 Buffs over the citadel, was taken down and hoisted over the clock tower in the Turkish barracks. This flag is now in Canterbury Cathedral.

It will be gathered, from the foregoing brief description of the occupation, that the attempt to make something of a ceremony of it, and the desire to ensure that specified units should have the privilege of being the first to enter, was not entirely successful. It will be noted, too, that the Naval Flotilla, which might have come up the river by night and done something to embarrass the Turkish retreat from Baghdad (the river was navigable at the time to Samarra and beyond) was not allowed to proceed. Much pillage and some loss of life amongst the peaceful inhabitants might have been avoided had the manner of our entry into Baghdad been less formal. The Naval Flotilla afterwards pushed 14 miles up-stream, capturing some barges and engaging the Turkish rear-guard, but they were too late to do much damage.

Baghdad city itself was a bitter disappointment to the troops. The gold domes of Kadhimain, and the blue-tiled domes of Baghdad and of the tomb of the Lady Zubaida, the palm trees and green garden groves of orange trees, heavy with fruit, presented at a distance a delightful spectacle, but the city itself offered no attractions. At no time had Baghdad ever been famed for its buildings: rather was it notable amongst Turkish cities for its lack of amenities. Built entirely of brick (largely unburnt), with narrow streets, it had suffered very severely from the effects of war and from the destructive enthusiasm of Khalil

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[1] Forbes (iii 281) states that an Ordnance Officer, Captain Kemp, was the first soldier to enter Baghdad; following behind the 13th Division, and coming to the city, he went straight on, under the impression that the Division was still in front of him. He found the streets full and was greeted with every sign of enthusiasm. For practical purposes, however, the Hertfordshire Yeomanry were 'first' on the left and the 2nd Black Watch on the right bank.

Pasha, who during his period of office had demolished several hundred houses on the left bank, in order to construct from north to south a broad thoroughfare that was to bear his name. The road had scarcely been begun, and only with difficulty could mule-carts thread their way through the great piles of debris. It was not a new scheme: it had actually been started in 1911 by Nazim Pasha, who had endeavoured to take a great slice of the garden of the British Consulate-General and of the property of the leading British firm, Messrs. Stephen Lynch & Co., partly in order to twist the Lion's tail, and partly in the hope that once foreigners had been brought into line he would have less difficulty in dealing with other house-owners.

Order was soon restored in the city, but owing to our delay in entering much damage had been done by Arab marauders. The Turks, too, had not been idle. For weeks past they had been requisitioning private merchandise for conveyance to Samarra, and had destroyed much plant and material of military use. They had failed, however, to give effect to their plan to blow up the citadel: the fires they lit burned but fitfully and few buildings were destroyed. Had we been a few hours earlier, we might have prevented the destruction of the German wireless station, which was not destroyed until after daybreak. In the Turkish hospital we found some six hundred wounded men, but a much larger number had been removed. Most of those that were left were too ill to move; many were suffering from typhus. They were housed in four different buildings—the largest in Baghdad, including the British Consulate-General—and with some exceptions had been without food for two days.[1] The wretched men were verminous and their wounds gangrenous, the stench was overpowering. The Turks had left only one medical officer, a Greek, and no orderlies; four French Sisters of Mercy and a few Armenian girls alone remained, able to do little but give water. Those who saw these terrible sights were able to realize what our own wounded suffered in Turkish hands, but they were also able to reconstruct the not less terrible conditions fifteen months earlier behind the British lines, on ships, barges, and at dressing stations—conditions that the highest British military medical authorities on the spot viewed, as we know from the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, with fatalistic resignation.

The townspeople of Baghdad naturally welcomed our coming; they had learned from their compatriots at Basra, ʿAmara, and Nasiriya of our administrative lenity and our financial liberality; whatever the future might bring forth, the present for them could hold nothing but good. The population included some 50,000 Jews, 15,000 Christians, 54,000 Shiʿah Arabs and 130,000 Sunnis—a total of about

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[1] See Macpherson, p. 321; Egan, p. 248; Lawley, p. 77.

250,000 souls. Hitherto our dealings had been almost solely with Shiʿah Arabs; henceforward we had to reckon with the Sunni element, predominant in Turkish times throughout Mesopotamia, and predominant to-day, though in a minority.[1]

Throughout this work those Muslims who are followers of ʿAli Hasan and Husain are referred to, for the sake of convenience, as '*Shiʿahs*', or Sectaries. This is the appellation bestowed on them by the orthodox Sunnis: the Shiʿahs refer to themselves as the Ithn Jafariya or the Ithn ʿAshariya. At the hands of the British Government Shiism is entitled on historical grounds to equal treatment with Sunnism instead of being regarded as a 'sect'.[2] Beliefs and institutions are in practice inseparable from the people who hold and perpetuate them, not in the form propounded by the original teacher, but in a form suited to the national character and the local environment. It is impossible to deal in greater detail in the present work with this aspect of Mesopotamian politics, but it will be understood that the deep-rooted cleavage between the two great branches of the Islamic faith was a factor of profound importance in all political discussions, and made extreme caution necessary in introducing the constitutional experi-

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[1] ESTIMATED POPULATION OF MESOPOTAMIA (EXCLUDING SULAIMANI) IN 1919

Division.	*Sunni.*	*Shiʿah.*	*Jewish.*	*Christian.*	*Other Religions.*	*Total.*	*Wilayat.*
Baghdad	130,000	54,000	50,000	15,000	1,000	250,000	Baghdad 1,360,304
Samarra	66,455	14,215	300	—	—	80,970	
Diyala	54,953	46,097	1,689	397	900	104,036	
Kut-al-Amara	8,578	98,712	381	127	—	107,798	
Diwaniya	1,000	192,300	6,000	5,000	200	204,500	
Shamiya	445	189,000	530	20	5	190,000	
Hilla	15,983	155,897	1,065	27	28	173,000	
Dulaim	247,000	200	2,600	200	—	250,000	
	524,414	750,421	62,565	20,771	2,133	1,360,304	
Basra	24,408	130,494	6,928	2,221	1,549	165,600	Basra 785,600
ʿAmara	7,000	284,700	3,000	300	5,000	300,000	
Muntafiq	11,150	306,220	160	30	2,440	320,000	
	42,558	721,414	10,088	2,551	8,989	785,600	
Mosul	244,713	17,180	7,635	50,670	30,180	350,378	Mosul* 548,378
Arbil	96,100	—	4,800	4,100	1,000	106,000	
Kirkuk	85,000	5,000	1,400	600	—	92,000	
	425,813	22,180	13,835	55,370	31,180	548,378	
Total	992,785	1,494,015	86,488	78,692	42,302	2,694,282	

See A. T. Wilson, *Journal*, and *C.A.S.* 1921.

[2] See Levy, *J.R.A.S.*, Jan. 1930, p. 147.

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* For estimate of population of Mosul Wilayat in 1924 see League of Nations paper C 400 M 147, 1925.

ments advocated from Syria, where the tradition of Sunni predominance was unquestioned.

The inhabitants of the country had suffered many things since the outbreak of war. Some had been taken for military service; others forced to pay large sums to avoid it. Gold had been seized and worthless Turkish paper money given in exchange; goods had been very freely requisitioned, sometimes against payment in paper money, but oftener against military receipts. Several hundred houses, many of them substantially built, had been wrecked by Khalil Pasha's ill-timed enthusiasm for municipal reform. There was much sickness, and though food was cheap and abundant the poorer classes were in evil plight.

General Maude had been busy on his way up-stream drafting, in consultation with Sir Percy Cox, proclamations for issue on his arrival; before he entered the city, however, he was warned by his Majesty's Government to make no announcement whatever pending further instructions. A day or two after the occupation, he received by telegraph the text of a proclamation which he was instructed to issue under his own name. He protested that it was not in all respects suitable for promulgation by the commander of a force in the field, but was overruled. On 19th March it was duly published in English and Arabic under his signature, and almost simultaneously was broadcast by his Majesty's Government in all neutral and eastern countries, great emphasis being laid on the historic character of the event which occasioned it.[1]

This document, for which the Cabinet accepted full responsibility, was drafted by Sir Mark Sykes and bears in every line the mark of his ebullient orientalism. It ran as follows:

PROCLAMATION

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE BAGHDAD WILAYAT

In the name of my King and in the name of the peoples over whom he rules, I address you as follows:

> Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy and the driving of him from these territories. In order to complete this task I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British Forces operate, but our Armies have not come into your Cities and Lands as Conquerors, or enemies, but as Liberators.
>
> Since the days of Hulaku your Citizens have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunken in desolation and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places.

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[1] Debates, H.C. 7.5.17.

Since the days of Midhat Pasha the Turks have talked of reforms yet do not the ruins and wastes of to-day testify to the vanity of those promises?

It is the wish, not only of my King and his peoples, but it is also the wish of the Great Nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile, when your ancestors gave to the world literature, science and art and Baghdad was one of the wonders of the world.

Between your people and the Dominions of my King there has been a close bond of interest and for 200 years have the Merchants of Baghdad and Great Britain traded together in mutual profit and friendship. On the other hand, the Germans and Turks, who have despoiled you and yours, have for 20 years made Baghdad a centre of power from which to assail the power of the British and the Allies of the British in Persia and Arabia. Therefore, the British Government cannot remain indifferent as to what takes place in your country, now or in the future, for, in duty to the interests of the British people and their Allies, the British Government cannot risk that being done in Baghdad again which has been done by the Turks and Germans during the war.

But you, the people of Baghdad, whose commercial professions and whose safety from oppression and invasion must ever be a matter of the closest concern to the British Government, are not to understand that it is the wish of the British Government, to impose upon you alien institutions. It is the hope of the British Government that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realized once again. The people of Baghdad shall flourish and enjoy their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals. In the Hejaz the Arabs have expelled the Turks and Germans who oppressed them and have proclaimed Sharif Hussain as their King and His Lordship rules in independence and freedom and is the ally of the Nations who are fighting against the power of Turkey and Germany. So, indeed, are the noble Arabs, the Lords of Nejd, Koweit and Asir.

Many noble Arabs have perished in the cause of freedom at the hands of those alien rulers, the Turks, who oppressed them. It is the determination of the Government of Great Britain and the Great Powers allied to Great Britain that these noble Arabs shall not have suffered in vain. It is the desire and hope of the British people and Nations in alliance with them that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown amongst the peoples of the Earth and that it shall bind itself to this end in unity and concord.

O! People of Baghdad. Remember that for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. Therefore, I am commanded to invite you, through your Nobles and Elders and Representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the Political Representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army so that you may unite with your kinsmen in the North, East, South and West in realizing the aspirations of your race.

Few more remarkable documents can have received the endorsement of a British Cabinet. I will not weary the reader with detailed criticism, (the historical references are a travesty of the facts), but a few points deserve attention. It purports to be issued in the name or to express the wishes of

(1) 'my King and the peoples over whom he rules'.
(2) 'my King and his peoples, and the Great Nations with whom he is in alliance'.
(3) 'the British people and their Allies'.
(4) 'the Government of Great Britain and the Great Powers allied to Great Britain'.
(5) 'the British people and Nations in alliance with them'.

It purports to be addressed to:

(*a*) 'the people of the Baghdad wilayat'.
(*b*) 'the people of Baghdad'.

It promises nothing, but states that the British people and Nations in alliance with them desire and hope

> 'that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown amongst the peoples of the Earth and that it shall bind itself to this end in unity and concord.'

It invites those to whom it is addressed:

> 'through your Nobles and Elders and Representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs . . . so that you may unite with your kinsmen in the North, East, South and West in realizing the aspirations of your race.'

If this meant anything, it meant that the Allies viewed with benevolence the idea of a united or federated Arabia, a conception wholly incompatible with the Sykes-Picot agreement; a Federation in which the Wahhabis of Najd, the 'Lords of Koweit and Asir', the Sunni Arabs of Syria and the Shiʿahs of ʿIraq, not to mention the usual minorities, would by some means unite to realize their presumed aspirations to govern each other.

In Baghdad, and to an even greater extent in Mesopotamia as a whole, the proclamation fell flat: it was critically studied, and the conclusion unanimously reached that it was 'politics' in the American sense; in some quarters it was openly derided; nowhere did it arouse the enthusiasm that a simply worded statement of policy might have evoked. It had been drafted in London by a romantically minded traveller; there had been no discussion of its phraseology or contents with Sir Percy Cox, nor through him with responsible personages in Mesopotamia. As Lord Cromer remarked,[1] it was not necessary for his Majesty's Government to emulate the Hebrew Prophets, but they would have been well advised, before issuing a manifesto, to enlist the help of Muslims in touch with Islamic opinion.

The proclamation was received in Parliament with mixed feelings.

[1] H.L. 20.4.15.

The Speaker of the House of Commons referred to it as containing a great deal of oriental and flowery language not suitable to our western climate. Mr. Devlin suggested that a similar proclamation would be apposite in Ireland, and Mr. S. MacNeill suggested that in writing it Sir Stanley Maude, who was an Irishman, was probably thinking of the Irish situation. Mr. Bonar Law replied that the proclamation was not the work of any single individual but was passed by the Government.[1]

Mr. MacVeagh returned to the charge the following day, asking whether the War Cabinet was aware that Sir Stanley Maude proposed, 'on behalf of Great Britain and the Allies, to force Home Rule on the Arabs without regard to the views of those who might desire to remain under Turkish rule; whether the Arabs have agreed amongst themselves as to the form of government they desire . . . and whether, in urging the Arabs to remain a united nation north, south, east and west, he had the sanction of the War Cabinet.' He, too, was perhaps thinking of Ireland!

The best comment was perhaps that of The Speaker, in reply to Mr. Peto, who was about to protest against drawing any analogy between ʿIraq and Ireland: 'The hon. member must not take things too seriously.'

Nor did General Maude's immediate policy in Baghdad tend in the direction suggested by the concluding paragraph of the proclamation. A military officer, Brig.-Gen. C. J. Hawker, a Guardsman with experience in the Sudan Army and in the Turkish Gendarmerie in Trebizond immediately before the outbreak of war, was appointed Military Governor. Though he talked Turkish, he knew no Arabic; and the deputy Governors appointed at the same time by General Head-quarters (without reference to Sir Percy Cox) were similarly handicapped and had no experience of this type of work. General Maude, who prided himself that he 'did most of the General Staff work himself'[2], was as unwilling to entrust organizing the civil administration to his Chief Political Officer, as he was to delegate responsibility to his principal staff officers. Military affairs, as will be seen hereafter, demanded much of his attention, but this did not deter him from attempting to control in detail the work of the Military Governor of Baghdad and many aspects of the civil administration, and the position of the Chief Political Officer became increasingly difficult.

His Majesty's Government had issued instructions that 'the existing administrative machinery was to be preserved as far as possible, substituting Arab for Turkish spirit and personnel, and that every effort should be made to induce local representative men to come forward and participate in the civil administration, British co-operation being limited as far as possible to advisory functions'. Further light as to the specific intentions of the British Government was forthcoming in May, when we were informed confidentially that his Majesty's Government had in view the establishment, in conformity with the Sykes-Picot agreement, of a predominantly British régime in the Basra wilayat, under a High Commissioner, of an Arab régime under some form of British protection in the Baghdad wilayat, and of an autonomous Arab régime (under French protection) in the Mosul wilayat. It required no special gift of foresight to perceive that such an arrangement would prove wholly impracticable, and unacceptable to the leaders of public opinion as soon as the outcome of the war was sufficiently assured to justify their taking sides. His Majesty's Government were so informed, but further discussion was merged in the departmental wrangles to which I shall shortly allude.

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[1] H.C. 21.3.17.

[2] Callwell, p. 292; Forbes, p. 278.

There was nothing in this pronouncement, nor in General Maude's proclamation, to contradict the general belief that at the appropriate moment Great Britain would declare Mesopotamia, like Egypt[1] and Cyprus,[2] to be a British protectorate. The instructions of the British Government as to the substitution of Arab for Turkish personnel were superfluous, and could not be regarded as having any bearing on the political future of the country. They were also at the moment wholly impracticable. The 'existing administrative machinery' was non-existent, practically every Turkish official having left. What records they could not remove they had for the most part destroyed. Only the tradition of Government remained; it was strong but it was not good. To induce Arabs to come forward and participate in the civil administration was exceedingly difficult, in the absence of an honest and straightforward announcement as to the form of government to be set up after the War. Every Arab in Baghdad knew that those inhabitants of the country who had taken service with the British and had fallen into the hands of Khalil Pasha at Kut had been tortured and put to a cruel death.[3] By no means all the leading Arab families of Baghdad or of the Wilayat were anti-Turk: on the contrary, the landed gentry and the subordinate civil clerical staff who had remained in Baghdad were on the whole inimical to an Arab régime such as was outlined in General Maude's proclamation. In their hearts they preferred the Turk, with all his failings, to the unprobed complications of an Anglo-Arab condominium. Turkish rather than Arabic was the language of polite society, and leading families boasted of their Turkish affinities rather than of their Arab forbears. Many had been educated in Constantinople; all had been taught to regard Constantinople as their cultural centre. From the Golden Horn in the past had come favours to many individuals; the Sublime Porte still enjoyed prestige.

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[1] On 18th December 1914, the Foreign Office had issued the following announcement: 'In view of the state of war arising out of the action of Turkey, Egypt is placed under the protection of His Majesty and will henceforth constitute a British protectorate. The suzerainty of Turkey over Egypt is thus terminated and His Majesty's Government will take all measures necessary for the defence of Egypt, and protect its inhabitants and interests.'

[2] Cyprus was formally annexed to the British Crown on 5th November 1914.

[3] See Curzon, H.L. 25.6.20. Mousley, p. 157.

The policy of General Head-quarters from 1917 till 1920 or later was to house as many officers, officials, and troops as possible in Baghdad, partly for climatic reasons, but mainly on grounds of administrative convenience,[1] though the Army Commander himself preferred being under canvas in summer.[2] The inhabitants soon found that in some respects General Maude's finger was thicker than his predecessor's loins. Within a few months, of the 200 or more fair-sized houses on the river front occupied by local notables, all but half a dozen or so were requisitioned as billets. The rent paid (pre-war rate plus 10 per cent.) was not illiberal, though houses not so taken could often be let at ten times the pre-war rental; but the scale on which houses were taken up constituted a serious grievance, which was felt more acutely by the upper classes and the leading Muslims than by the Jews and Christians, who lived in less accessible parts of the town. House-to-house searches for arms, the enforcement of vigorous and not always wise sanitary precautions, and the almost daily promulgation by the Military Governor of fresh and to the townspeople apparently arbitrary regulations on a bewildering variety of subjects were sources of irritation. Little or no attempt was made to apply the experience gained by Brig.-Gen. Brownlow in Basra. Some of the difficulties were an outcome of the nature of things; others, and those not the least, were a product of the nature of men. General Maude had frequent experience of Arab hostility on the Tigris; his Divisional and Brigade Commanders had shared them. They had known, like General Wolseley's troops in the Sudan Campaign of 1884, 'harassing night alarms with enemies having all the stealthy cunning and ferocity of wild beasts'.[3] Of hatred there was none, of bitterness remarkably little, but confidence was of slow growth; and a difficult task fell to the lot of the Political Officers in districts and attached to Divisions in the field, whose duty it was to sow the seeds of confidence and goodwill and to water and protect the tender growth.

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[1] In the opinion of many senior officers the Head-quarters of 1st and 3rd Corps should never have been in Baghdad.

[2] Callwell, p. 292.

[3] *History of the Sudan Campaign*, vol. i, p. 323.

Notwithstanding the difficulties to which I have alluded, and which were for the most part beyond his control, General Hawker was remarkably successful in introducing law and order into every branch of the municipal administration of Baghdad. His knowledge of the ways of Turks stood him in good stead; he was, moreover, a personality, and he was respected even when he was not understood. He enjoyed the confidence of General Maude, and did his best to conform generally to the ideas of the Chief Political Officer. He kept some state, he was well acquainted with Turkish etiquette, and he never lost his temper. His tenure of office as Military Governor continued until September 1918, when his office was absorbed by the civil administration, and he was relieved by Mr. E. B. Howell of the Indian Civil Service (later Foreign Secretary to the Government of India).

We must now turn our attention to the course of events in the field beyond Baghdad. In the operations following the capture of Baghdad, General Maude showed himself at his best, and his Corps and Divisional Commanders, no longer so closely controlled as on the Tigris, showed in every succeeding phase of the operations that they were able to make good use of the military weapon forged for them by General Maude's administrative genius, with fuel and steel supplied by India and Great Britain, in fires kept at white heat by the well-directed enthusiasms of his principal staff officers, chief amongst whom was Sir George MacMunn. General Maude had to consider the possibility of co-operating with the Russians on his right and of synchronizing his movements to some extent with those of Allenby on his left. His intention was to follow up his success at Baghdad by pushing out columns north, north-east, and west of Baghdad.

The western column under Brig.-Gen. Davidson was delayed till 18th March at Baghdad by transport difficulties, but reached the Euphrates on the 19th March. Falluja, 35 miles from Baghdad, was occupied almost without opposition, and diplomatic relations were established with the religious leaders of Karbala. They hastened to establish their position as the heads of a theocratic *imperium in imperio* by exchanging telegrams of congratulation with King George, whose reply dated 24th April was as follows:

> 'I have received with pleasure your congratulations on the brilliant achievements of my troops, whose victorious arms will assure the security of your famous shrines. My earnest desire is for the well-being of 'Iraq and its peoples, the preservation of its Holy Places, and the restoration of its ancient prosperity.'

The occupation of Falluja made it impossible for the Turks again to breach the embankment and flood the environs of Baghdad, but the breach already made at Sakhlawiya by the Turks on 20th March was too extensive to be repaired: it gave endless trouble in later years and is still a menace to the prosperity of the country between Baghdad and Falluja.

The road to Falluja and later on the light railway to Dhibban were saved, at great cost, by extensive embankments. A simpler way of easing the outflow would have been to cut the bank on the right side of the Euphrates above Sakhlawiya and permit the river to discharge its surplus waters into the Habbaniya Lake, on the lines originally planned by Sir W. Willcocks. This was not done because it was apparently thought that it would increase the hostility of the Dulaim tribe, some of whose lands would be flooded. The decision was reached without reference to the political officers concerned, who in point of fact held other views. The flooded area would have been a useful barrier for us against the Turks till July, and would have had little effect on the economic situation or on the psychology of the Dulaim.

Leachman, now a Brevet Lieut.-Col., was in political charge on this flank and did excellent work on lines peculiarly his own. He had no illusions about Arabs, having been employed with troops on the Tigris since the occupation of ʿAmara, but he bore no malice; he carried weight with the Divisional and Brigade Staffs, was popular with all ranks, and was respected, as well as feared, by the Shaikhs. His forceful character, his extreme mobility and robust common sense commended themselves to every one, except, on occasions, his harassed superiors. During the early days of our occupation he was indispensable. His doings were the subject of endless tales, and his name was almost as familiar in Mesopotamia as that of Sir Percy Cox.

Some Armenian women and children who had escaped from the general massacre of their compatriots, which the Turks had carried out during the previous twelve months in circumstances of inconceivable cruelty throughout Turkey, took refuge in the British lines; others were brought in by Arabs, redeemed at market rates by Leachman and by other political officers, either direct from the owners or through intermediaries, and sent to Baghdad. The women had been living as concubines, the children as slaves: a large proportion of these women, however, remained faithful to their Arab masters, and were not ill-treated. The orders of the Turkish Government prohibiting the nomad tribes from taking to themselves strange wives had no more effect than the fulminations of the Hebrew prophets in similar circumstances. A proclamation by Sir Percy Cox enjoining the humane treatment of Armenian refugees [1] had good results, and these official efforts were admirably backed up by the local Armenian community, headed by Mr. M. H. Kouyoumdjian of Baghdad and Mr. Dervichyan, O.B.E., Honorary Belgian Consul at Basra, with whom were associated amongst others the Armenian Archbishop, Mousegh Seropian, Mr. Hagop Ghazikian, and Mr. Sebouh Papazian. The actual work of tracing and recovering orphans from Arab camps was undertaken by Mr. Roupen Harrian, who did his work courageously, tactfully, and well. The Armenian community as a whole did more than any other body for their unfortunate fellow-countrymen; it is due primarily to their efforts that the Armenian colony in Baghdad exists to-day.

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[1] 'Whereas it is known that many Armenians in order to escape from the persecution of the Turks, who as is notorious have committed every sort of iniquity and oppression on

The possession of Falluja also enabled us to get into touch with the tribes of the Arabian desert, the ʿAnaiza and Shammar, and with the Shammar Jarbaʿ, south and west of Mosul, while we were from the first in close contact with the Dulaim. The progress of our relations with these tribes is dealt with more fully elsewhere. It is enough to say here that the prompt occupation of Falluja had valuable political results, which might have been even more extensive had we been able to penetrate southwards to Najaf and Diwaniya, where a small Turkish garrison still held out.

The pursuit of the enemy towards Samarra was entrusted to a strong force from the First Corps under General Cobbe, which came into contact with the Turkish Force numbering 5,000 with 24 guns, entrenched across the railway south of Mushahida, twenty miles from Baghdad, with an armoured train on the line, their left flank resting on the Tigris.

Had a strong force of cavalry been at General Cobbe's disposal, he might have captured the bulk of the force opposed to him, for their right flank only extended a few hundred yards beyond the railway, but the horses were tired out, and General Maude was unable to meet General Cobbe's requests for mounted support. A frontal attack by the Infantry was the only means of dislodging the Turks, and it was brilliantly executed by the 7th Division under General Fane, at a cost of over 500 casualties of which 400 were in the 21st Brigade consisting of the 2nd Black Watch, the 9th Bhopal Infantry, the 20th Punjabis, and the 1/8th Gurkhas. The 56th Rifles from the 28th Brigade also suffered heavily. The heaviest casualties were incurred by the 2nd Black Watch under Colonel A. G. Wauchope, which had 230 casual-

the Armenian community, have taken refuge among the tribes of Eastern Syria and Northern Arabia, it is hereby notified to the Shaikhs and tribes that should any such homeless Armenians find their way to your parts and take refuge with the tribes they should be treated kindly and humanely. Such good treatment will be favourably remembered by the officials of the British Government. Any persons giving correct information as to the whereabouts of such refugees will be rewarded, while those persons who keep Armenians in concealment or confinement will be severely punished.'

ties, including 10 officers, or nearly half its strength. Many units suffered acutely from thirst: they had marched and fought practically continuously for over 24 hours, and when at midnight they occupied the station, a few minutes after the last train had left, they were utterly exhausted. The Corps Cavalry pursued at dawn, but the Turks, as agile in retreat as stubborn in defence, eluded them. General Maude, as already stated, could spare no cavalry, so the pursuit was abandoned and the bulk of the force returned to Baghdad. It was apparently of this battle that General Wauchope wrote in *Blackwood's Magazine* the following poignant description of what some of the wounded suffered:

> 'Surely the world offers no scene more pitiful than that of a battlefield after action. I know, by personal experience, the suffering entailed in lying day and night untended with broken limbs, the utter weariness from wounds, and the exhaustion after conflict—the tragedy of all surroundings, the cries of those who call for help that never comes, a passionate longing for death alternating with a craven fear of foe and wandering marauder; and above all the horror of the great vultures winging round and round in ever closer circles.'

I, too, have heard those cries, on the Majinina and on the Euphrates—'Don't leave me, sir—don't leave me.' They ring still in my ears, in English and Punjabi.

It remains to refer to the operations undertaken on the left or eastern bank of the Tigris and the Diyala. On 13th March a column from the 40th Brigade occupied Daudiya, on the left bank of the Tigris, without opposition. Five days later Buhriz, and a few hours later Baquba, were occupied by a force under General Edwardes, and the Diyala bridged. On the 23rd Shahraban was occupied by troops of the 3rd Division under General Keary. The operations were rendered difficult in the extreme by the absence of maps or reliable information as to the terrain, which was intersected in every direction by deep canals which could not be crossed without bridging. Inadequate use seems to have been made of the Royal Flying Corps: it was not till a much later stage in the campaign that trained survey officers were used as topographical observers. General Keary's task was further complicated by the fact that General Maude was under a misapprehension[1] as to the strength of his force, which he put at 8,000 men, whereas it was actually only 4,600 rifles and 6 guns, and by the fact that the orders given to General Keary were based on the assumption that the Russians would be in a position to co-operate actively by the 24th March, on which date they were expected to arrive near Khanaqin. These assumptions held the field equally in London, and Sir William Robertson telegraphed on the 22nd to General Maude to arrange with General

[1] *O.H.* iii. 278.

Baratoff the spheres of action of the two forces, which should be dictated by military exigencies only, without regard to the spheres of political influence already agreed on by the Governments of Great Britain, France, and Russia (i.e. the Sykes-Picot agreement). As a matter of fact, the revolution in Russia had actually commenced on the day before General Maude entered Baghdad, but there was as yet no suspicion of the momentous consequences; on the contrary there was great confidence in Russian co-operation in this region, and General Maude was given to understand that his plans should be framed on this basis.

In conformity with his instructions, General Keary pushed forward to the foot of the Jabal Hamrin, a tangled mass of reddish sandstone, rising some 800 ft. from the plain. The position was one of great natural strength, and the Turkish force under ʿAli Ihsan Pasha numbered 5,600 rifles, 240 sabres, and 240 guns, of which 4,500 rifles and at least 22 guns were actually in position. General Keary's force was therefore substantially outnumbered. He was, however, pressed by General Maude to pursue a vigorous offensive, always on the assumption that Russian co-operation could eventually be relied on, and on the 25th he launched his attack. His plan was to hold the enemy in front, whilst the bulk of the column were to cross the Ruz canal well to the south and attack the enemy's left flank at dawn. The plan was well laid but not wholly successful. Premature commencement of bridging disclosed the plan to the enemy, and when the stream was crossed the attacking force, consisting of the 9th Brigade, lost direction and struck the ridge too far to the west. It was severely handled and was only extricated with difficulty by the 8th Brigade. Our casualties totalled 1,200, including about 300 men taken prisoners. The 105th Mahrattas had 286 casualties, the 2nd Dorsets 220, the 93rd Infantry 161, the 1/1st Gurkhas 146, the 2/124th Baluchis 125, the 1st Manchesters 102, and the 34th Sikh Pioneers 80; few units were over 400 strong.

The Turks withdrew on the following day and crossed the Diyala on the 1st April, closely followed by the 8th Brigade, who occupied Qizil Robat that day, and joined hands with General Baratoff's Cossacks. ʿAli Ihsan Pasha had reason to be satisfied with the outcome of the tactics he had adopted. He held off the Russians on the Pai Taq Pass with two battalions while he withdrew his troops from Persia through Qizil Ribat. Meanwhile, he held the Jabal Hamrin position till he had withdrawn the rest of his force, inflicted a reverse upon his opponents, and then withdrew this rear-guard also. The 13th Turkish Corps was thus disposed of, and out of reach; it remained for General Maude to deal with the 18th Corps, which had been transferred by Khalil Pasha to the left bank of the Tigris near the mouth of the Adhaim River: it numbered about 5,000 rifles and 24 guns and was advancing. The 13th Division under General Cayley attacked it, and drove it across the Adhaim, at a cost to us of some 450 casualties, while the enemy left in our hands 200 dead and 180 prisoners.

General Maude now brought Keary's column back to Baghdad, and detailed a strong force under General Marshall, consisting of the 13th Division, with a Cavalry Brigade under the redoubtable Colonel Cassels, for further operations against the 18th Turkish Corps.

General Fane's column on the right bank of the Tigris, some 6,000 strong with 44 guns, was now ready to advance, and on 7th April occupied Sumaika, Balad, and Harba in rapid succession, inflicting losses and taking prisoners, with little cost to his force. This done he resumed the defensive, and awaited developments across the river, where General Marshall had reached the Kewar reach, due east of Balad.

Leaving the 38th Brigade to watch the Adhaim, General Marshall turned east and at dawn on the 11th met the Turkish force, which had been advancing down the Khalis canal. The encounter was a surprise to both sides, and the Turks retreated across the Khalis canal to ʿArab bu Abin, their casualties being estimated at 1,000 against our 250. General Marshall attempted to force the position, but it was too strongly entrenched, and the attack was unsuccessful. On the 15th, however, the enemy withdrew to an entrenched position in the foot-hills of the Jabal Hamrin beyond Delli ʿAbbas, where they were left in the care of General Keary's column. General Marshall returned to the Adhaim with the 35th Infantry Brigade and two regiments of Cavalry under Colonel Cassels, and having concentrated the 38th Brigade at Dugama prepared to force a crossing over the Adhaim. This was effected on the night of the 17th/18th. The operation, which has been described in some detail by Major Dewing, was a complete success and a notable achievement. The stream was shallow, meandering in a bed some 2,000 yards wide, some 40 ft. below the general level of the plain. The walls of the bed were generally precipitous, the bottom treacherous; the opposite bank was held by 2,000 Turks, well entrenched. The river had already been reconnoitred by the 40th Brigade on the 8th, when General Marshall had contemplated a crossing. A feint was made up-stream by the cavalry before dawn, and a little to the south of them the 6th Loyal North Lancashires, supported by artillery, made a determined attack. When day broke the Turks were fully engaged in dealing with the cavalry, whom they correctly presumed to be feinting, and with the Lancashires, whom they wrongly presumed to be making the main attack. Meanwhile, the other two Lancashire battalions had crossed the Adhaim unobserved in pontoons within half a mile of its confluence with the Tigris. The whole Turkish position was captured, and the pursuit continued to Samarra. The cavalry under Colonel Cassels played a brilliant part, pursuing until 2 a.m. next morning, and capturing some 1,200 Turks. Our losses were 73 in all.

On the right bank General Fane moved forward on the 16th to the Median Wall,[1] a rampart of vast antiquity, some 30 feet high, some 3½ miles south-east of Istabulat station. On the 18th, General Cobbe arrived and took charge. He was joined two days later by Cassels' cavalry and on the 21st by the 8th Brigade, which had crossed the Tigris by a boat bridge established at Bʿarura, north of Balad. The Turks, strongly entrenched, held a line across the Dujail canal, a narrow water-course 20 feet deep, with very steep banks, crossed by three bridges, all of which were behind the Turkish line. Their strength was about 7,000 rifles with 31 guns, with 4,000 rifles and 16 guns in reserve at Samarra.

On the 21st, battle was joined; the weather was intensely hot and a dust-storm was raging. It was soon clear that the Turks had recovered their morale, for the fighting was as fierce as anything experienced in the campaign. The heaviest fighting fell to the 1/8th Gurkhas and the 2nd Black Watch, but a large number of units were engaged, many of them heavily; nearly all suffered acutely from thirst. Little progress was made during the day, but during the night the Turks executed another masterly retirement to a strongly entrenched position 4½ miles to the rear. It was noon on the 22nd before our force regained contact. The heat was intense, and the dust and the high wind made reconnaissance by air impossible and effective observation on the ground exceedingly difficult. The cavalry and the cars of the Light Armoured Motor Battery sought the enemy's right flank, while the main attack was made on his left flank, assisted by General Thomson's artillery on the left bank of the Tigris. The attack succeeded beyond expectation, and the Leicesters, overshooting their objective, captured seven guns, only to lose them shortly afterwards when the Turks counter-attacked with such vigour that the whole reserves of the 28th Brigade had to be thrown into the fight. On the Turkish right, Colonel Cassels had made the best use of his opportunities. The L.A.M. cars had actually reconnoitred Samarra station, and his guns had effectively shelled the enemy's right rear. Just before dusk a party of about forty of the 32nd Lancers, led by Colonel W. W. G. Griffith and supported by four armoured cars, rode straight at the Turkish position under cover of a heavy bombardment, in order to relieve pressure on the 56th Rifles,[1] which were heavily engaged. Under heavy fire the Lancers reached the Turkish trenches practically without casualties, and the Turks began to run or surrender. But the ground proved too much for the L.A.M. cars, which could not move up in support, and the artillery barrage had to be lifted. The Turks rallied and almost annihilated the small detachment, which suffered twenty-five casualties, including Colonel Griffith and two other officers killed. It was a gallant piece of work, and attained its object by relieving pressure on the infantry at a critical moment. It afforded, too, fresh proof that the cavalry were no whit inferior in spirit to other arms of the force, and once released from the shackles that had cramped them, were capable of playing an important and gallant role in the campaign.

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[1] For a full description see Lane, *Babylonian Problems*, 1923.

Fighting continued during the night, but before morning the Turks had retired north, and we entered Samarra unopposed on the morning of 23rd April. The two days' fighting had cost us 2,000 casualties; it had certainly not cost the Turks less, for they left 500 dead on the field, and we had captured some 250 prisoners and much war material.

One battle still remained to be fought against the indefatigable ʿAli Ihsan Pasha, who had transferred his forces from the Jabal Hamrin on the Diyala, some forty miles west, to the Adhaim River, and now moved rapidly against our eastern flank. General Marshall was ready for him[2] and was not deceived by a cleverly planned feint at Delli ʿAbbas, carried out with a force of 2,300 men and 4 guns. ʿAli Ihsan was met at Dahuba on the 24th by a strong force (35th, 38th, and 40th Brigades, and 7th Cavalry Brigade) and forced to retire 25 miles to Band-i-Adhaim, where the river breaks through the Jabal Hamrin. General Marshall followed him, and on the 30th April the battle of Band-i-Adhaim was fought. It was a hard-fought action, and costly; climatic conditions were adverse in the extreme. The Turks were entrenched across the river, a mere trickle of water at this time of year, meandering in a bed 2,000 yards or more wide, bordered by vertical banks some 30 feet in height. General Marshall feinted against the Turkish left flank, and at dawn under cover of all his artillery put the 40th Brigade, commanded by General Lewin, straight into a village just behind the enemy's centre. The stroke was completely successful, so much so that the objective was overshot and two battalions, the 4th South Wales Borderers and 8th Cheshires, in hot pursuit of the retreating Turks, 300 of whom had surrendered, advanced two miles beyond the Turkish second line, capturing another 400 prisoners and 6 guns and 4 machine-guns. This was contrary to their orders, but their commanding officers and the adjutant of the Cheshires had been wounded, and the enemy appeared so broken and demoralized that it seemed right to those on the spot to take the risk and disregard their written orders. Would that the veteran soldiers who stood obediently outside the Dujaila redoubt a year before had shown a like soldierly spirit of enterprise! The South Wales Borderers did not purposely disregard their orders, as they had moved through a gap in the line: they went boldly forward whilst the 5th Wiltshires took up a position in the Turkish first line in support. The Cheshires and South Wales Borderers had outrun their telephone line by three-quarters of a mile, when they came under heavy cross-fire from the Turks. Before General Lewin could do more than send forward the Wiltshires and 8th Royal Welch Fusiliers in support, a sudden dust-storm blotted out the whole area in which the Cheshires and Borderers were engaged and made artillery support impossible. ʿAli Ihsan Pasha, by a brilliant manœuvre passed his whole reserve across the river, wheeled, and after delivering a smashing blow at the leading battalions of the 40th Brigade, moved unseen across the front of the 38th Brigade. A confused, stubborn fight followed, in the course of which the Turks recaptured all but one of their lost guns and 400 of the prisoners, together with about 150 of our men. The Turks themselves had been so severely handled that they withdrew during the night through the hills.

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[1] In supporting them, immediately previous to the cavalry charge, Lieutenant J. R. N. Graham, of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (attached to the 136th Machine Gun Company), rendered most gallant and effective assistance, for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was wounded three times. See Candler and *London Gazette*, 14.9.17.

[2] For some time past the Intelligence Branch had devised means of deciphering Turkish wireless communications.

Our casualties were 692 during the day, of which more than half were among the Cheshires and Borderers, who lost more than 50 per cent. of their strength. The Turkish losses were certainly greater, for we buried over 200 and took 365 prisoners and but for the dust-storm they would have suffered still more severely. The 7th Indian Cavalry Brigade under General Jones started off in pursuit, but was recalled by General Maude, who did not wish to risk anything at this moment by a pursuit into the hills. The retreating enemy were bombarded by our aeroplanes. Six machines dropped half a ton of bombs on their columns, camps, and material, killing at least fifty men and working havoc among the animals.[1]

The enemy was now out of reach and Baghdad was for the present secure. Between us and the Turks lay on every front some sixty miles of desert, waterless except for the main streams of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Diyala, and raised by the heat of the sun during the days to an unbelievable temperature—120° in the shade and 160° in the sun were normal readings between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. All ranks and all branches of the service had shown superb spirit and wonderful powers of endurance. The transport, ordnance and supply columns, medical and signal services, and other ancillary departments, had been strained to the utmost limit. Movements had taken place ever since the capture of Baghdad, for the most part at night, and unless fighting was in progress the fighting formations had generally been able to snatch some rest by day, though under the burning sun sleep was seldom possible. For the auxiliary services there was no such respite: their toil was unending; sickness took a heavy toll, and threw a burden on those who remained at work proportionately far greater than in the infantry. The patient *drabi* or muleteer, drudge of all the world, underpaid and too little esteemed by his comrades in the ranks, often had six mules to tend instead of three; ward orderlies worked till they dropped, for the sick in hospital needed constant attention if they were to be kept alive: to supply them with water was itself a heavy task. Under the burning sun the physical labour of lifting, loading, and unloading ammunition and supplies was intensified, and burdens which men could carry lightly in the winter became almost unbearable. Rifles and belts galled the skin, softened by violent perspiration: there were more sore backs and galled shoulder-blades in the tents of the army than in the transport lines. Seldom indeed could the eye perceive spare flesh on man or beast: all alike were gaunt and weathered by exposure. So fierce was the sun that the corpses of men and animals did not putrefy, but were desiccated so rapidly that within a few days they could be lighted and burned without fuel.[1] One came to understand the belief of ancient philosophers that the world was made of four elements—earth, air, fire, and water.

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[1] Tennant, p. 156.

The Royal Flying Corps, whose activities have scarcely been referred to in the foregoing pages, had been working at high pressure ever since operations began in November. Until the beginning of April they had the unchallenged mastery of the air and were limited only by the peculiar difficulties inherent in aviation in Mesopotamia at this period, viz. sodden landing-grounds, high winds, low visibility owing to sand-storms, and ineffective machines. Early in April the enemy produced new and faster machines—Fokkers and Halberstadts; they were countered a few days later by Bristol machines with Clerget engines, and later on with Spads, which were a great advance on the B.E. and 'Tinsyde' machines hitherto in use. Aerial photography began and was developed on a large scale with invaluable results. The maps prepared by the Survey sections in collaboration with the experts of the R.F.C. were sometimes distributed by air to units only a few hours before the battle.[1] The casualties amongst airmen were heavy, but were far outweighed by their value both practical and moral to the troops on the ground and in particular to the Artillery. They, too, are scarcely mentioned in these pages, but 'the sons of thunder', as the Arabs were wont to call them, were ever present, and without them the Infantry could seldom have made progress. Incessant dust-storms and mirage made their work more than usually difficult. The heat was at times not without its effect on the cordite charges; metal that had been exposed to the sun became too hot to handle, and the labour of handling heavy weights in the open bore with exceptional severity on the gunners. By the end of April they were almost as swarthy and gaunt as the Arabs of the plains in which they fought. The Naval Flotilla co-operated throughout the operations on the Tigris as far as the mouth of the Adhaim, H.M.S. *Tarantula* with her six-inch guns being of great service during the battle on 17th/18th April.

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[1] See Fortescue loc. cit. for reference to similar conditions in India in 1859.

General Maude had good reason to be satisfied with the results attained, which he summarized as follows in his last dispatch, dated 15th October 1917.

> 'As a result of the fighting during April the enemy's 13th and 18th Corps had been driven back on divergent lines, the former into the Jabal Hamrin and the latter to Tikrit. The 13th Corps had twice taken the offensive, with results disastrous to itself, and the 18th Corps had been defeated and driven from its selected positions on four occasions. Our total captives for the month amounted to some 3,000 prisoners and 17 guns, besides a considerable quantity of rolling stock and booty of all kinds. The objectives which we had set out to reach had been secured, and the spirit of the enemy's troops was broken. The fighting carried out during this month had imposed a severe strain upon the troops, for the heat, the constant dust storms, and the absence of water on occasions, tested their stamina very highly. But as conditions became more trying the spirit of the troops seemed to rise, and at the end of this period they maintained the same high standard of discipline, gallantry in action and endurance which had been so noticeable throughout the army during the operations which led to the fall of Baghdad and subsequently.'

General Maude's reputation as a soldier will, I am confident, rest rather on his achievements subsequent to the capture of Baghdad than on the events leading up to that historic event. The direction of the earlier operations was at times brilliant, but the success achieved was in the opinion of some competent military critics due less to strategy or tactics than to the preponderance of men and guns at his disposal. In the operations beyond Baghdad this superiority in men and guns was far less marked; he was opposed by a Turkish Commander, 'Ali

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[1] See Beazley, Tennant, and *War Record Survey of India*.

Ihsan Pasha, scarcely less accomplished than himself, and by troops whose military qualities were, as has been shown, of a very high order. To advance within two months a distance of two hundred miles from his Advanced Base, to organize and maintain three separate forces operating in different directions, without the co-operation he had been told to expect from the Russians, was a masterly achievement. The conduct of the troops was uniformly admirable. Perfect co-operation existed between navy, army, and air force and between all branches of the purely military services. Sir William Marshall proved himself a brilliant commander in the field, and Brig.-Gen. Fraser, his B.G.G.S., was as good as his chief. Among the Brigade Commanders Cassels, Lewin, and Thomson stood out as born leaders of men.

Our battle casualties since operations began on the Tigris below Kut had been about 18,000 out of a total fighting force of about 45,000, or 40 per cent. It was a high price to pay for our victories, however complete, but considerably less than the toll that was paid on the Tigris in the previous year in the vain attempt to relieve Kut.

The troops now withdrew to summer quarters, to prepare for further efforts that would be necessary in the autumn if the force was to play its allotted part in the Great War. Few of those who had taken part in the fighting north of Baghdad had set eyes on the famous city; for the great majority their first entry was in an ambulance. They remained for the most part on watch, their faces set to the north-west, in preparation for a fresh advance.

CHAPTER XV

THE EXTENSION OF BRITISH INFLUENCE IN THE BAGHDAD WILAYAT FROM THE CAPTURE OF BAGHDAD TO THE DEATH OF GENERAL MAUDE

> 'Let the prosperity of the country be your great object; protect the cultivators and traders, and allow no man whether vested with authority or not, to oppress them with impunity. Do justice to every man.'
>
> DUKE OF WELLINGTON (*India*), *2nd March* 1805.

Turkish Rule in Baghdad wilayat. Co-operation with Arab Leaders. The Naqib of Baghdad. Disorders at Najaf. Samarra. Behaviour of Russians. Arabs secure modern rifles. Question of disarmament. Question of Arab co-operation. Sir Percy Cox appointed Civil Commissioner. Popular demand for Civil Administration. Views of Mustafa Kamal Pasha. Situation on Diyala and at Khanaqin—on Tigris and on Upper Euphrates—on Middle Euphrates. Operations on Euphrates. Reinforcements for Mesopotamia. Battle of Ramadi. Advance up Tigris. Defection of Russians. Death of General Maude. Estimate of his military achievements.

REFERENCE has already been made to the instructions of his Majesty's Government that the existing administration was to be preserved as far as possible, substituting Arab for Turkish spirit and personnel, and that every effort should be made to induce local representative men to come forward, and to limit British co-operation to advice.

The voice was that of the India Office, but the hand was that of the versatile Sir Mark Sykes, who was now the recognized Mesopotamian expert at the Foreign Office. The instructions were based upon radically false premisses. The Turkish system was, as stated in Miss Bell's classic *Review* (p. 20), open to objections quite as serious politically as administratively. It was calculated not to settle but to unsettle the Arab inhabitants: instead of utilizing even temporarily the power of the Shaikhs, the Turks had pursued their habitual policy of attempting to improve their own precarious position by the destruction of such native elements of order as were in evidence. The wilayat of Basra had for years past presented a comprehensive picture of lawlessness. On the Tigris, thanks to the existence of a navigable river, an intermittent authority had been maintained by playing upon the hereditary enmities of the great tribal groups and the personal rivalry which existed between individual members of the ruling houses. In the Euphrates valley Turkish authority had for a decade ceased to be effective, except as an irritant.

At the root of tribal unrest lay the Ottoman agrarian system, conceived without regard for prescriptive rights established prior to the Turkish conquest. It was agrarian unrest primarily that had kept the Muntafiq district in constant rebellion, and ʿAmara in perpetual ferment. The defects of the system cried aloud for a remedy: Mr. Dobbs had, during the first eighteen months of our occupation, studied it at first hand; it was he who as Revenue Commissioner made the first study of agrarian conditions, and his acute eye, combined with a profound acquaintance with tribal custom, enabled him to effect modifications in the system so substantial as to make it workable. That the general lines of the policy adopted in accordance with his advice were wise was proved by the result: we had never experienced serious trouble on the Tigris, and pacification was making steady progress on the Euphrates. We were now instructed by Whitehall, without previous reference to or consultation with Sir Percy Cox or Mr. Dobbs, to pursue in the Baghdad wilayat a policy differing from that adopted with success in the Basra wilayat, which was not mentioned in the Proclamation. 'Basra was destined', observed a Persian newspaper, the *Habl-ul-Matin* of Calcutta, with unusual prescience, 'to be a separate dish at the banquet of the victors'.

No time, however, was wasted in arguing the point. We considered our instructions to extend British influence in the Baghdad wilayat as mandatory, and the detailed instructions as to the methods to be followed as declaratory—pious expressions of a spirit with which we were already animated and, so far as the population would allow us, in full sympathy.

On the one hand we steadfastly upheld the theory—for until some time after the capture of Baghdad it was little more than a theory outside the sanjaqs of Basra and ʿAmara—that we were not at war with the Arabs, but were co-operating with them for their liberation from Turkish misrule. On the other hand each political officer in his own sphere endeavoured to demonstrate to the Arabs that we could provide them with something better than the Turks had ever offered. A profound impression was produced among the tribes, for example, by the rebuilding of Kut. This work, which was an act no less of piety than of policy, was undertaken immediately after the occupation by my friend Major W. C. F. A. Wilson of the 104th Rifles, who, after being wounded at the first battle of Kut while in action with his regiment, had joined the Civil Administration at my solicitation in February 1916, and had been remarkably successful as Political Officer at Qurna.[1]

[1] When it became known that he was under orders for Kut, Shaikh Uqbashi and half a

It cost us but 60,000 rupees, and so cunningly and economically was the reconstruction effected, streets widened and bazars improved, that within six months it was a better place than it ever had been. The effect on the tribes was pronounced. Here was a Government willing and able to construct, and to that end to enlist all and sundry in the rehabilitation of things within the ken of the common man. Even in the dark days of 1920 there was no outbreak of disorder in this district.

For reasons which will appear later, the instructions of his Majesty's Government both that we should induce local representative men to come forward, and that British co-operation should be limited as far as possible to advisory functions, were, in the circumstances of 1917 and for some years afterwards, impossible of fulfilment. Most of the leading men within the walls of Baghdad had, as was to be expected, pro-Turkish leanings, which were not the less genuine because prudently dissembled in the presence of the invaders. With the Naqib of Baghdad, the religious head of the Sunni community, Sir Percy Cox at once got on good terms. The Naqib had owed much to the Turks in the time of Sultan ʿAbdul Hamid, when Sunni magnates stood in high account, and he derived his position from his descent from Shaikh ʿAbdul Qadir Gilani, whose tomb, dating from the fourteenth century, is the most revered object of Sunni pilgrimage in the world of Islam, after the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He and his family were wealthy and learned, but his political influence was not great. He was disinclined to compromise himself by the public expression of definite opinions on current politics, and was still less prepared to put himself at the head of affairs. This attitude he maintained till October 1920, when he agreed, at the urgent request of Sir Percy Cox, to preside over the first Council of State. His high religious and social position and the universal respect he inspired placed his motives above all suspicion and endowed the Council of State with the necessary dignity. 'I shudder to think', wrote Sir Percy Cox, 'how my early efforts would have fared had he failed me at this time. For one of his venerable age and retired habits, it was a signal act of patriotism for which I could not be too grateful.'[1] It was not less difficult to find, outside Baghdad, personalities able and willing to co-operate actively in the work of civil government. Karbala and Najaf were torn by sanguinary feuds. The Kammuna family, who were temporarily placed in charge of Karbala, used their position remorselessly for their own ends, and were, moreover, supplying the Turks with provisions on a large scale. Even if we were able to close our eyes to the blockade-

dozen leading men made a special journey to Basra to beg for his retention, and I was inundated with petitions and telegrams from merchants and others.

[1] See Lady Bell, ii. 529. He died in June 1927, aged 86.

running proclivities of the family, it was clear that it was only a matter of time before fresh feuds would break out. A British political officer was therefore installed in the autumn of 1917, to the satisfaction of the ʿ*Ulama*, who had long been praying for the eclipse of the Kammuna. Within two years they were praying, and working, for the downfall of the British political officer, and after another two years these turbulent priests were endeavouring, with some success, to arouse public opinion against the government of King Faisal.

At Najaf affairs took a more tragic turn. The town was dominated by one Haji ʿAtiya, who immediately before the War had been successively outlaw, fugitive, and prisoner. Brutally tortured in prison, he had become mentally unstable. But there was method in his madness: contraband trade was his speciality, and ʿAjaimi ibn Saʿdun Pasha his friend. The sole representative of the Army of Occupation was Agha Hamid Khan,[1] whose reserved and diffident bearing concealed the stoutest of hearts. He went to Najaf in July. In November fighting broke out, and anarchy threatened to supervene once more. Subsequent developments do not belong to this stage in my narrative: enough has perhaps been said to demonstrate the difficulties of executing in this region the instructions of His Majesty's Government.

On the Euphrates, west of Baghdad, the turbulent Zobaʿ (whose chief, Shaikh Dhari, was later, in August 1920, to murder Colonel Leachman) mocked openly at General Maude's proclamation, and awaited events, as did the Dulaim under their stout-hearted chief, ʿAli Sulaiman. A large proportion of the lands of each of these tribes remained on the side of the Turks till well into the following year, and they had, perforce, to sit on the fence. ʿAli Sulaiman, however, sat from the first on the right side, and rendered us loyal service, which in later years brought its reward.

On the Middle Euphrates anarchy reigned. Diwaniya was indeed garrisoned by a small Turkish force of some thirty men, who held out till the end of August. This was thanks to the courage of a Turkish officer of Circassian origin, Lieutenant Muhammad Effendi, who hanged or shot such of his superior officers as wished to withdraw.

The population of Samawa was split into two factions, one pro-Turkish, the other, led by Saiyid Taffar, who had suffered much for his opinions, pro-British. Outside, the Bani Hachaim ran wild, uncontrolled by any tribal or other authority.

On the Diyala our difficulties were scarcely less great, for the canal-heads, on which the orange and date groves of Baquba and the rice-fields of the whole district depended for water, were in Turkish hands. Nowhere had the cultivated areas suffered more from devastation at the hands of their former rulers, and the rehabilitation of the agriculture of this rich district was correspondingly slower than elsewhere.

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[1] See p. 268.

Beyond the Jabal Hamrin lay the Russian forces—'*chimaera bombinans in vacuo*' of Rabelais' fancy. Only a few months previously we had confidently hoped to see them established at Mosul, enabling us to reduce our forces in Mesopotamia and to concentrate on defeating the Turks in Palestine. It was clear by the middle of May that such hopes must be abandoned. The presence of these detachments was, indeed, a menace to our own operations. The Russian military organization was elementary: they lived on the country, and seldom paid for anything. They had no political officers and no liaison with the inhabitants.[1] Friction followed licence, and the tribes turned on the invaders. We suffered not a little in reputation from the conduct of our Russian Allies: wherever they had passed, famine and disease stood ready, like the two-handed engine of Milton, to strike once, and strike no more.

On the Tigris between Kut and Baghdad scarcely a cultivator remained: they had been systematically cleared out by the Turks, and had dispersed in all directions. Above Baghdad the situation was little better: the nomad tribes were within the sphere of Turkish influence, the cultivators had largely been dispersed.

To crown the tale of trouble, the population as a whole had contrived to provide itself with modern weapons and abundance of ammunition, to such effect that the price of a Mauser or Lee-Enfield, which before the War stood at £20 or £25, had dropped to £5 or less. British and Turkish rifles had been picked up on fields of battle or stolen on the lines of communication in thousands; ammunition had been accumulated on a scale hitherto undreamt of. In the quest for arms the Arab showed qualities of courage, cunning, and perseverance which, if turned to a better cause, would have ensured success in any walk of life. In one British camp over seventy boxes of 1,000 rounds each were dug up and stolen from under the noses of the sentries.[1] Every narrative of the period testifies to the ingenuity displayed in these predatory activities and the nervous irritation they caused.

The possibility of disarming the tribes was frequently discussed, but our military strength on the Tigris and Euphrates after the capture of Baghdad was at no time adequate to the task, and the only action taken, at the instance of the military authorities and at their expense, was to purchase rifles and ammunition from any tribesman who would sell. More than half a million rounds, several hundred good rifles and as many useless ones were thus purchased, but the measure did more harm than good. Prices did not rise in the open market. The rifles and ammunition freely issued to our Allies on the Syrian side, together with captured Turkish arms, soon filled the gap, and the money we paid went to purchase more and better rifles.

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[1] See Mason.

In Baghdad itself uncertainty prevailed. We could make no statement as to our intentions: General Maude's proclamation, studied by the acute and legalistic minds of the leading inhabitants, failed altogether to convince. The general belief was that the Central Powers would win the War, or that at worst it would be a drawn game. Those who prided themselves on their knowledge of world politics declared that ʿIraq would be handed back to Turkey in return for the liberation of Belgium. The manner in which the military censorship was exercised in Baghdad lent point to their prognostications, for each succeeding mail from India brought papers replete with Reuter's telegrams and other news which had passed the scrutiny of the censorship in Bombay, but had failed to win the approval of the mandarins of General Head-quarters.

Such was the situation in the Baghdad wilayat when on 16th May Sir William Robertson telegraphed that the Foreign Office 'deemed the moment opportune to exploit our Arab policy and to foster a general movement to embarrass the Turks'. 'The Arab movement', continued the telegram, written no doubt with Egypt in mind, 'has been of distinct military advantage in the past and it is unsound not to continue to encourage it.' General Maude was directed, after discussion with Sir Percy Cox, to send an outline of the action which his political officers could take to enlist the sympathy of the Arab tribes north of and adjacent to the Euphrates, and to extend in a general way the scope of the whole movement. This was followed by a suggestion that we might be well advised to subsidize tribal levies in the Mandali region and strengthen our relations with the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, so as to add security to our line of communication on the Tigris if the Russians fell back. This telegram crossed letters from General Maude in which he reported 'the usual crop of Arab incidents', to deal with which, he said, he had found himself obliged to keep mobile columns at various centres ready for immediate action. Before he could answer the telegram, punitive operations had to be taken from three centres—Falluja, Samarra, and Baquba.

The incursion of Sir Mark Sykes into the intricate details of local policy on the strength of a flying visit in 1915 (see Chapter X) added to the heat and dust in which operations in Mesopotamia were being conducted. General Maude replied curtly that Sir Percy Cox thought that some levies might be raised round Mandali, and that the Wali[1] might be induced to maintain in future the neutrality that he had observed in the past. He followed this up by a long telegram (which he did not discuss with Sir Percy Cox), in which he said that he was not clear what policy Sir William Robertson wished him to follow.

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[1] The Political Officer at ʿAmara at this time, Colonel D. L. R. Lorimer, had as Vice-

> 'He had', to quote the *Official History*, 'hitherto resisted constant political demands for detachments from his force, feeling they were militarily unsound and likely to involve him in operations outside his main objective. Similarly he had endeavoured to keep the Arab population quiet, treating them well so long as they took no part in the operations, trading with them and making friends with them, but repressing instantly and vigorously by force any attempt at hostility. When there was no fighting in their vicinity the tribesmen soon settled down, but became restless and disturbed if drawn into the vortex of war. It appeared that our policy was tending towards enlisting the tribes under our banner, though it was not clear exactly how it was proposed to use them. They were quite unreliable, and though they might fight for us one day, they were quite likely to take up arms against us the next. They had, moreover, little or no fighting value; because—while, as expert marauders, they would take full toll from a demoralized retreating army—they were quite ineffective, though tiresome, against unbroken regular troops.
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> 'General Maude went on to enquire if it was the wish to employ Arabs for fighting purposes. He was already paying considerable sums of money and had given arms to certain individuals who gave little return for it save passive friendship, and it seemed open to question whether this could not be obtained on lower terms. Guerilla warfare by tribesmen was worrying, but had no real bearing on operations as long as regular troops were intact, and it had a disquieting effect on the population. He was not, therefore, in favour of its encouragement broadcast, though special agents could occasionally be employed usefully on such missions as cutting telegraph lines. If, however, the general principle of employing tribesmen to fight was to be adopted, they should be carefully organized under officers who possessed suitable knowledge and wide military experience and they should be used as part of the general plan of campaign under one direction. Otherwise we might only disturb the country needlessly, extend the area of unrest and find ourselves involved in operations which had no bearing on the main issue. The telegram concluded:
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> > '"Even if these forces are systematically organized, I am inclined to think that, owing to lack of time and the inadequacy of means for training them, their influence for good will at best be small, whilst they will always represent potential danger in the area of operations."'[1]

This telegram suggests that General Maude had taken to heart Macbeth's 'bloody instructions which being taught, return to plague the inventor'. Coming from one who had never served in the East

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Consul at Ahwaz been in long and friendly contact with the Wali before the War; we were thus well able to negotiate with him if anything was to be gained. Colonel Lorimer's Report on Pusht-i-Kuh (1909) will long remain a classic of its kind.

[1] *O.H.* iv.

before, it is a remarkable example of his adaptability and sound judgement; but it also suggests that, priding himself on doing most of the General Staff work, he was preparing to do the Political work as well. The telegram was followed three weeks later by a message stating, as a result of investigation by Sir Percy Cox, that some of the leading Shaikhs of the ʿAnaiza, one of the largest groups of Arab tribes between the Euphrates and Syria, were prepared, if given sufficient backing, to assist us by action against the Turkish railways in Syria, by stopping supplies from reaching the enemy,[1] and, if we occupied Ramadi, by bringing in the Dulaim Arabs to make good the country from Ramadi to Sinjar. It would be necessary to consult our Commander-in-Chief in Egypt in regard to action against the Syrian railways; the blockade to keep supplies from the enemy would be expensive and probably only partially effective; the occupation of Ramadi was not yet desirable from a military point of view; and the Dulaim Arabs were causing us no inconvenience for the time being. Though Sir Percy Cox thought that the assistance of the ʿAnaiza would achieve a wide and important effect apart from its precise military value, General Maude was doubtful as to the benefit we should derive; but he admitted that anything they could do in the Euphrates valley towards Karbala and Najaf, where the country was open to enemy agents and influence, would be of service.

Steps would be taken to get into touch with the Chief of the Yezidis at Sinjar to gain assistance for raids against the enemy communications under British officers when we were able to send them. But, as regards the tribes along the Persian frontier, the Kurds, instead of co-operating with us as we had hoped, were hostile to the Russians; and little could be done with them unless we occupied Khanaqin, which he regarded as impracticable. We could expect only benevolent neutrality from the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh.

In concluding, General Maude said that he was in favour of small raids at opportune moments against definite objectives on the enemy's communications; but he was not in favour of encouraging guerrilla warfare or promiscuous acts of hostility, as he considered they would do little good and might do harm. Moreover, he thought that the raising of levies would not be worth the expense involved. Apart from this it should be, in his opinion, our primary aim to pacify the country and keep on friendly terms with its inhabitants, so as to be able to concentrate our energies against the enemy.

It was found that the authorities in Egypt considered that any action by the ʿAnaiza controlled from Mesopotamia should be exclusively directed against the Euphrates line of communication to Mesopotamia; and General Maude concurred in their reasons for this opinion, though he pointed out that there were no railways or railway bridges there offering definite objectives. The recent Arab successes near the Egyptian front, however, led the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to express the hope that effective Arab action against the Euphrates line might force the Turks to retain approximately the same number of men there as General Maude was obliged to keep on his own line of communication; and he pointed out that *shaktirs* floating down-stream offered tangible objectives for Arab irregulars.[1]

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[1] There was still a considerable leakage of supplies to the Turks from the Euphrates area, at too great a distance from the centres held by the British to be effectively controlled by them.

Concurrently with this somewhat unsatisfactory correspondence, a number of important matters concerning the civil administration of the country were being discussed between London, India, and Mesopotamia. General Maude's instinct for centralization of authority in himself had led to a certain amount of friction with Sir Percy Cox, which had been increased by the trend of telegrams received through Sir William Robertson from the Foreign Office, and by the gradual realization of the fact that his Majesty's Government had two distinct objectives in Mesopotamia—the defeat of the enemy and the establishment of British influence in the Baghdad wilayat. General Maude was becoming increasingly convinced that the second objective could not be pursued without detriment to the first. He had reason to expect that large bodies of Turks would be thrown against him in the autumn; he considered that his strategical plans and tactical dispositions to counter these moves were inconsistent with the systematic settlement of the vast area comprising the two wilayats. In common with all his Divisional and Brigade Commanders, many of them with much service on the frontiers of India and in East Africa, and with bitter experience of Arab marauders and of Shaikhs like Ghadhban who had altered course with every turn of the tide, he was sincerely opposed to the use of armed levies on a considerable scale until we were in a sufficiently strong position to control them in any circumstances that were likely to arise. He asked that he should be given every opportunity to concentrate his whole energies on preparing for future military operations, and that his attention should not be distracted by having to justify his opinion when he felt that civil considerations which were being urged upon him conflicted with military interests. It was his duty and his wish that the development of civil administration should be pushed forward as far as could conveniently be done without conflicting with military interest; and as a proof of this he pointed out that such development was already taking place in many directions.

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[1] *O.H.* iv. A shaktir is a small pontoon.

But he was afraid that other measures, if adopted, might militate against obtaining success against the enemy.

After much further correspondence, it was finally decided that Sir Percy Cox should assume the title of Civil Commissioner, sending reports direct to his Majesty's Government and submitting a copy of them before dispatch to General Maude to give his opinion if he thought it necessary. It was laid down that the ultimate responsibility of the General Officer Commanding was to remain unimpaired; that only the minimum of administrative efficiency necessary to preserve order and to meet the needs of the occupying force should be aimed at; that the amendment of laws and introduction of reforms were to be kept within the narrowest possible limits; and that *no large or controversial administrative questions were to be raised.*[1] The words italicized, with which the telegram concluded, left us on the spot to do the best we could. Henceforth our motto was to be the Horatian —*Rem facias, rem, si possis recte, si non quocunque modo rem.* The political uncertainties were great, but not greater than those which surrounded the fortune of our arms. In one respect, at least, the position was advantageous; we were not committed at this stage to a cut and dried plan, but could await events and be guided by experience.

I may say at once that neither Sir Percy Cox nor, at a later stage, I myself, could subscribe to the view that we should aim only at 'the minimum administrative efficiency necessary to preserve order'. Much more was at stake than the preservation of order. We were called on to develop local resources to the utmost extent in order to reduce the strain on ocean shipping and on our lines of communication. To the military importance of this aspect of our work General Maude's private letters and official correspondence bore ample testimony. The population was demoralized by over two years of war, by successive and successful revolts against Turkish authority, and by Turkish requisitions. The harvest had been bad and seed-grain was very scarce; the bazars had long been empty of such necessaries as tea, sugar, and piece-goods. Turkish gold and silver currency had almost disappeared, its place being taken by Turkish paper money, much depreciated before we arrived, and still more so after the occupation of Baghdad. It seemed imperative to those charged with the creation of a civil administration that the reign of law should be re-established and as far as possible the amenities of peace restored in every portion of the occupied territories. The advice that reached us from every responsible quarter was to the same effect: the shaikhs, the priesthood, and the merchants all alike clamoured for post and telegraph offices, police, roads, and municipal organization. Municipalities were set up in every township in accordance with the Turkish system, which was admirably conceived on paper, but seldom had any other existence. Men wished to be free to buy and sell land and houses once more, and demanded the administrative machinery necessary to set the seal of legality on their transactions. Merchants wished to recover debts, and landowners to borrow money: both united to demand the setting up of courts of law and all their accessories to subserve their respective purposes. There were bad tenants to be evicted, fresh leases to be legalized, deeds of inheritance to be executed. The priesthood had in many cases been deprived of the proceeds of the *Waqf*, or Pious Foundations, for two years: in other cases the proceeds had been misapplied. Corruption and maladministration had eaten into every department of life. The British national temperament did not permit, and the inclinations or preferences of the inhabitants did not encourage, the pursuit of a policy of *laissez-faire*.

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[1] *O.H.* iv. 27.

Fas est et ab hoste doceri. The following extract from a letter[1] written by Mustafa Kamal Pasha, now President of the Turkish Republic, to Enver Pasha, on 30th September 1917, on the subject of the situation in Turkey, at the very moment when we were commencing to gather up the broken threads of civil government in Mesopotamia, are so pertinent as to merit reproduction here:

> 'The most vital question to-day is to enquire what is going on in the civil administration and among the people. Our interest is the protection of the country, and if even a corner of it is given over to the influence and administration of the foreigner the life of the Empire is being destroyed. . . .
>
> We should at once decide, in my opinion, to strengthen internally the civil administration, and ensure security of life. Provide officers for the gendarmerie, reorganize, as far as possible, the administration of justice, assist commerce and food supplies and check corruption, or at least confine it to its narrowest limits, so that the country will have a firm and healthy base from which to work. If a prolongation of the war brings more trouble and calamity to us, we shall at any rate have our country and people behind us. We must not allow them to be a broken reed.'

Mustafa Kamal Pasha has since shown himself to be one of the greatest statesmen that Turkey, or indeed the Middle East, has ever produced, and the emphasis that he laid on civil administration in his capacity as Commander of the Seventh Army at a critical moment in the War is the best endorsement of the soundness of the policy pursued from the outset in Mesopotamia of organizing an efficient civil administration upon efficient foundations.

Although General Maude, as already explained, felt unable to occupy the outlying portions of the Baghdad wilayat effectively during the summer or autumn of 1917, when the situation was both difficult and perilous, we nevertheless contrived to make progress in all directions during 1917. May saw Mr. Nalder installed as Political Officer at Baquba, with Walker[1] as his assistant in Shahraban. The bulk of the population were cultivators; nomad tribes still existed, but the tribal organization was feeble; the Shaikhs had little influence and their followers tended to look to Government officials to settle their differences. Such tribes as existed were partly in the Occupied Territory and partly under Turkish influence; they were further divided by bitter and ancient blood feuds, which made the maintenance of order on the roads difficult; when one tribe raided a caravan it contrived that the blame should fall on the other. The ʿAzza and the Jubar in particular were at daggers drawn, and it was not till late in 1919 that peace was finally made between them by the Political Officer, Major C. C. J. Barrett, of the Bombay Political Department.

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[1] For the full text see *O.H.* vol. iv, App. 42.

It was not till 1917 that Khanaqin was occupied. Major Soane, the Political Officer sent from his post at Mandali to initiate a civil government, had a task of extraordinary difficulty. The whole countryside had been ravaged by the Russians and Turks, not once but repeatedly. Food was short and famine was rife: only about one-third of the normal population of the district remained, the majority having fled to escape from oppression; in no town in Mesopotamia was our advent more joyfully received. The tribes too had suffered much, and were raiding the settled areas freely in every direction. Their activities were countered and circumscribed, though not entirely checked, by a body of Kurdish Levies under British officers, including Captain R. C. Geard.[2]

Across the frontier our difficulties were scarcely less acute. The conduct of our Russian Allies, worse by far than that of the Turks, had placed in the hands of German agents a weapon of which they were quick to make use. This, combined with a lack of confidence as to our permanent intentions, hampered Major Soane's efforts to restore normal conditions, fortified though he was by his unrivalled knowledge of the people, their language and their habits, and his personal acquaintance with every chief of importance. It was not long, however, before he acquired a personal prestige and reputation which, it is safe to say, will survive for more than one generation. His book *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*[3] is a classic, but it conveys but a faint picture of the fierce, dominating, unruly personality of the author. General Maude's proclamation to the Arabs was utilized to our disadvantage in this area by the German and Turkish agents, who pointed out that the existence of the Kurds was ignored, and that if it meant anything it meant that they would be placed under the heel of the hated and despised Arabs.

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[1] He died of pneumonia at Mosul on 26.11.1919.

[2] Killed near Tabriz in 1920.

[3] See Bibliography.

On the Tigris, we were in occupation of Samarra, but the proximity of the Turks prevented much progress being made in any direction. The supply of seed was short, and the Arabs, from bitter experience of Turkish methods, declined to sow their accustomed catch crops in the desert, and were very short of plough cattle. The majority, too, both in the town and in the desert, were Sunnis, with pronounced pro-Turkish leanings. The presence in the area of large British forces involved a vast amount of necessary but somewhat thankless work—inquiring into complaints on both sides, and acting as intermediaries between the inhabitants and the army. The military roads that had been hastily constructed had blocked innumerable small canals; the simple cultivators proceeded to cut ditches through the roads at their pleasure, generally by night, to irrigate their fields. To construct all the necessary culverts was not an easy task, nor was it at first a complete solution; for the Arab, finding the culvert was a little smaller than he could wish, thought nothing of grubbing it up and breaking the road. These and smaller questions demanded infinite patience and much tact, to which General Staff Officers and harassed Directors of Works were sometimes as little amenable as were the local Shaikhs.

On the Upper Euphrates our problems were not very different. Till the fall of Ramadi in September 1917 our position was, in Arab eyes, insecure, and the powerful ʿAnaiza tribe under Shaikh Fahad ibn Hadhdhal held aloof from us, while the Dulaim were for the most part under Turkish influence. The demands of the army for sheep and cattle tended seriously to deplete flocks, and the land blockade was a source of irritation to the tribes, whose pockets were better lined than their stomachs. Major C. F. Macpherson, who went to Falluja as Political Officer with the troops, went on sick leave in May, when his place was taken by Colonel Leachman. Both had a thorough knowledge of the country and the language.

It was on the Middle Euphrates that the problem of restoring peace seemed most difficult. The population was partly tribal, partly settled, but the authority of tribal Shaikhs was for the most part still effective. Macpherson took over charge of the District on return from India in October 1917 and, with his assistants at Musaiyib, Hindiya, and Karbala, did admirable work. He was unable, however, to do anything during the year at Diwaniya, where an Arab Government Agent (who was appointed at a time when a small detached Turkish garrison was being besieged by the inhabitants, and the town was in an uproar) sat uneasily astride the whirlwind of local intrigue. Unable to proceed to his post, the Agent took up his quarters at Daghara, but here too, he found, like Noah's dove, no rest for the soles of his feet. The tribes demanded salaries for keeping the peace, though a severe inter-tribal fight was in progress. They besieged him in the *sarai* and had recourse to a mild form of torture, denying him sleep by the simple expedient of executing an incessant war dance on the roof and around the building till money was forthcoming, after which he was permitted to leave.

Below Hilla, in the Shamiya, until October 1917, we were represented only by Hamid Khan, a cousin of the Agha Khan, at Najaf[1], and by a Christian Arab Agent at Kufa. Until December of that year not a single British soldier was seen on the Middle Euphrates, south of the Hindiya Barrage, and such influence as our Political Officers could exert was almost wholly moral. Serious riots at Najaf showed that it was no longer possible to leave the Middle Euphrates to its own devices.

Hamid Khan, whose authority was unsupported by force, was unable to grapple with the situation, and begged the Civil Commissioner to accept his resignation. The latter asked and received from the G.O.C.-in-Chief authority to dispatch a British Officer, and Captain Balfour, a senior and very capable member of the Sudan Civil Service, who spoke Arabic fluently, was appointed to the Shamiya district on the edge of which Najaf lies. He made a preliminary inspection of the whole district, escorted solely by Arab Shaikhs, visited Najaf on the way down, and arranged a settlement between the ʿAnaiza and the townsfolk, holding the town Shaikhs responsible for compensation to the tribesmen. He left Hamid Khan in charge as his Deputy and continued his tour of the district. On his return some two days later, he found that the settlement with the ʿAnaiza had not been carried out. Only two of the town Shaikhs, Haji ʿAtiya and Kadhim Subbi, came to see him, and an attempt to put pressure on them led to a riot which was secretly incited by Haji ʿAtiya. Captain Balfour stood to his post until the Government Office had been rushed three times by the crowd, and then consented to leave under the protection of the Q̰iliddar, to whose house, at some distance from the office buildings, he went. The riots did not cease with the looting of the Najaf office; later in the day similar disturbances occurred at Kufa, where the Government Agent summoned in the local Shaikhs and speedily got matters in hand. At Abu Sukhair, lower down the river, where Captain Balfour was to have set up his head-quarters, no Government official was on the spot to deal with the rioters, and the *sarai* was gutted.

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[1] See p. 258.

Captain Balfour, still unsupported by any troops, turned to the aged Mujtahid, Muhammad Kadhim Yezdi, for help. On the advice of the latter ʿAtiya and Kadhim Subbi asked for and were given pardon, and the town returned to normal conditions. In the rural districts the leading Shaikhs, being actively engaged in cleaning out their canals with money borrowed from us, before sowing grain which the British Administration was ready to provide, were pledged to the existing order and upheld it.

Captain Balfour took up his residence at Kufa, but in view of the paramount importance of the harvest he could not be left there backed only by the goodwill of tribal chiefs, Saiyid landowners, and Shiʿah divines, and exposed to the hostile influences of ʿAjaimi over the border. Sir Percy Cox visited the Euphrates valley in the first week of December, and on his report the G.O.C.-in-Chief placed small garrisons at Hilla, Kifl, Kufa, and Abu Sukhair. It was the opinion of Sir Percy Cox that it would be inadvisable to garrison Najaf. With a population of over 40,000 a large force would have been needed in the town, and it was anticipated that the presence of a mixed force at Kufa, seven miles away, would have the necessary tranquillizing effect. Haji ʿAtiya did not, as ordered, come in to see Sir Percy Cox at Kufa with the other town Shaikhs, alleging fear of treachery; he attempted to see him in Najaf and was told that he must come for the interview to Baghdad. In spite of all reassurances, it was evident that he was too greatly fear-driven ever to show his face in Baghdad, and by this time, although it was not then known, he had probably hitched his car to ʿAjaimi, who having recently returned from a visit to the Turks at Hit, with a plentiful supply of money, had opened a vigorous campaign of propaganda.[1]

It was clear that further military action against the Turks, and the occupation of the principal towns on the Middle Euphrates by British troops, was essential if substantial progress was to be made in the extension of British influence in the Baghdad wilayat. Some months, however, elapsed before anything was done to improve the situation. Great importance was attached by the General Staff to the repair of the Sakhlawiya dam, and General Maude appears to have been convinced that its repair was essential on strategical grounds. For tactical reasons, as remarked by the Official Historian (iv. 21), he would have preferred to leave it alone, as its overflow flooded the whole area west of Baghdad, but it was thought that the floods, if uncontrolled, would threaten the Samarra and Musaiyib railways and cut off Falluja. In the light of ten years' experience we now know (see p. 249) that these apprehensions were not justified, that a local system of embankments would suffice to control the floods, to keep open the roads to Falluja, and to protect the line to Musaiyib, and that the line to Samarra could in no case be affected. Sir William Willcocks was available in Cairo, and in view of the detailed survey he had made for the Turkish Government before the war might well have been summoned to Baghdad to give advice; but a proposal to enlist his assistance was rejected, as also was an offer of his services free of charge some months later.

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[1] See *Review*.

An attempt was made, at the hottest time of the year, to occupy Dhibban, some twenty miles south of Ramadi, in order to cover the working parties on the Sakhlawiya dam. General Maude desired to combine the seizure of Dhibban with a stroke against Ramadi, which was occupied by about 1,000 rifles and 6 guns, though it was not his intention to occupy it permanently. The shade temperature recorded on the official thermometer at Baghdad on 8th July, the day selected for the attack, was 122°; in tents and dug-outs it reached 130°; in the sun it was 160°. General Maude suggested that in view of the heat it would be well to restrict operations to the occupation of Dhibban, but the local commander over-persuaded him. The attack took place on 11th July and proved abortive. The troops suffered terribly from the heat, and by the evening were completely exhausted and incapable of further efforts. Some men lost their reason, some died of thirst, many died of heatstroke: our total casualties were 566, of which 321 were due to the heat.

The force withdrew from opposite Ramadi before dawn on the 13th. The Turks themselves did nothing to impede the retirement, but the Arabs, some 1,500 strong, made repeated attacks on the rear-guard and persevered, undeterred by heavy losses, till the force reached Dhibban during the evening of the 13th.

Meanwhile, General Maude was in constant communication with Sir William Robertson on the broad strategical issues of the campaign in the East. The Imperial General Staff, to quote the *Official History* (iv. 42),

> 'would have preferred from a purely military point of view to carry out an active defensive rather than an offensive policy in Palestine and Mesopotamia, enabling them to concentrate more British troops against the chief enemy on the Western Front. His Majesty's Government, on the other hand, doubtful of obtaining a decision owing to the apparent deadlock in the West, considered that the moral and political advantages of an advance in Palestine and Syria offered tangible compensation; while in Mesopotamia one of our main guiding factors was our anxiety for the security of India.'

It is difficult to take the last sentence seriously: India was being bled white by the incessant demands of Mesopotamia for men and munitions. The situation in Persia was now in hand, and Sir Percy

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Indian Army

Sykes had achieved considerable successes. It seems clear that Mesopotamia had by this time become, like Syria and Palestine, an objective in itself, apart from the main campaign in Europe, for Turkey was at this time engaging on both fronts far larger British forces than her own, greatly to the benefit of her European allies. For one Turk under arms in Mesopotamia we had two combatants and about four non-combatants on our ration strength; for one gun on the Turkish side we had three; whilst half a million tons of ocean shipping, innumerable river craft, and hundreds of miles of railway line and rolling stock were diverted from urgent war purposes elsewhere, to maintain our forces against those of Turkey.

It was decided to reinforce General Maude with a regiment of cavalry and horse artillery battery from France and two Indian cavalry regiments from India; it was further decided to replace mule transport by Ford cars, in order to increase his radius of action and economize in the transport of fodder. Petrol could be obtained in any quantity from Abadan, and in terms of ton miles went about twenty times as far. In September it was decided to send a new Division, the 18th,[1] more guns, more Light Armoured Motor Batteries, and more Machine Gun Companies, to reach Mesopotamia early in 1918.

In September an additional Flying Squadron, the 63rd, arrived. Railway progress was rapid: one line was built from Baghdad to Baquba on the 2 ft. 6 in. gauge and a light line ran thence through Shahraban to a point at the foot of the Jabal Hamrin, known as Table Mountain; another, on the standard (4 ft. 8½ in.) gauge, which was that of the Baghdad-Samarra line, was completed to Falluja in December. By the end of October the new port at Nahr ʿUmar was open and railway connexions with Basra and ʿAmara, including a floating bridge[2] across the Qurmat ʿAli branch of the Euphrates were completed; the railway from Basra to Nasiriya was working well, and a beginning had been made with a line from Kut to Baghdad.

General Maude was now ready to strike, and he struck hard. By the third week in September the 15th Division under General Brooking had been concentrated at Falluja and Dhibban, and on the weather becoming cooler, the moment was ripe for a forward move. On

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[1] See H. D. Fanshawe.

[2] This bridge was a remarkable piece of engineering. The depth and breadth of the creek made it impossible to improvise a permanent bridge, which would have blocked it for river craft. The rise and fall of the tide was as much as nine feet. It was made of tubular dredger pontoons anchored end on right across the current, in violation of all the rules for floating bridges. The pontoons were later used for the South Bridge at Baghdad, which sank once during construction and was completely destroyed later, when it was replaced by the Maude Bridge, which met a similar fate in the floods of the spring of 1923. (See Hall, Witts.)

27th/28th September, after making every ostensible preparation for an attack along the banks of the Euphrates, General Brooking advanced to the Mushaid ridge between the Habbaniya Lake and the river. Having done this, he sent the 6th Cavalry Brigade under General Holland-Pryor by a wide detour to cut the Turks' line of retreat west of Ramadi and to attack their rear. They accomplished this by 4 p.m., and cut the telegraph-lines. He then moved the 12th and 42nd Brigades to the broken ground south of Ramadi, and pushed his attack home, pinning the enemy firmly to their positions round the town.

During the night of the 28th/29th, under a bright moon, the Turks made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to break through the cavalry cordon, and to withdraw to Hit. There was some hard fighting, our total casualties amounting to about 1,000, a large proportion being but slightly wounded, and at 11 a.m. Ahmad Bey and his entire force of 3,500 men surrendered. The booty included 13 guns, 12 machine-guns, 2 armoured launches, 2 barges, and a great quantity of munitions.

It was a brilliant piece of work, as methodical in preparation as vigorous in execution: the few Turks who escaped from the toils were completely stripped by their quondam allies of the Dulaim, who thereafter gave us no further trouble. In their eyes the victory was decisive, and the Turkish accounts show that its importance was not minimized at their Head-quarters, who gave the commander of the survivors full discretion to retire from Hit if attacked by superior forces.

On our right flank General Maude was equally active. Mandali was occupied on the 28th September by the 7th Cavalry Brigade under General Norton, almost without resistance, the Turks thereby losing their best source of supplies. Soane was installed as Political Officer. Qizil Robat and Khanaqin now lay open to us, but for some time General Maude held his hand. All available information indicated that the Turks intended to make a determined attempt to recapture Baghdad; it was not until after 6th September that Enver Pasha, who clung tenaciously to the idea, finally agreed to postpone, if not to abandon, the attempt, which General Falkenhayn had planned, though it is clear that as early as 9th August he had doubts as to its feasibility.[1]

The documents captured at Ramadi, and other information, gave General Maude the impression that the Turco-German offensive was hanging fire. The impending completion of the metre-gauge line to Baquba, and the completion of the light railway to Shahraban, strengthened his hands on this flank, and on 7th October he instructed General Marshall to prepare for a forward move. On 18th

[1] See Zwehl.

October, operations commenced, and by the 20th General Marshall had occupied the Jabal Hamrin on both banks of the Diyala, meeting with little opposition and suffering few casualties.

Scarcely were these operations concluded when an engagement took place on the Tigris, north-west of Samarra, near Huwaislat, which had been occupied a few days earlier by 4,000 to 6,000 Turkish infantry. On being attacked under General Cobbe's orders by the 7th Division under General Fane, they hastily withdrew up-river to Daur.

During the latter half of October, all the information received by General Maude indicated that for the time being the enemy's main energies were directed towards Palestine. Mesopotamia had again become a side-show, in which on our side nearly half a million men played their allotted parts. On 31st October General Allenby captured Beersheba and 1,800 prisoners, and it seemed clear that though troops were being moved by the Turks to Palestine instead of to Mesopotamia, there was little reason to fear that our Palestine front would be seriously menaced. On our right flank in Persia, Turkish and German agents were making desperate efforts to create trouble, but with indifferent success. Russian troops were still in the field, but were immobilized by the internal situation in Russia. Their co-operation was luckily no longer essential.

General Maude waited a few days after the action at Huwaislat before ordering a further advance, and then, on 28th October, directed General Cobbe to attack the Turkish position round Daur on the banks of the Tigris, which was held by some 4,000 rifles and 20 guns. The main attack was made on the right bank by the Cavalry Division under General Jones, and the 7th Division under General Fane, with the 21st Brigade under General G. A. J. Leslie on the opposite side of the river. The action commenced before dawn on 1st November, and by 9.30 a.m., at a cost to us of some 200 casualties, the Turks were in full retreat to Tikrit, where their main force was entrenched. General Maude showed some reluctance, for reasons which are not clear, to permit General Cobbe to exploit his victory to the full and to move on Tikrit, but on the evening of the 4th he authorized a further advance. The ground was on this occasion stoutly contested, and our casualties were comparatively heavy, especially in the artillery and cavalry, totalling in all about 1,800, of whom 161 were killed. The Turks evaded capture, and by dawn on the 7th were in full retreat, leaving 137 prisoners and 300 dead. The burned-out hulk of the *Julnar* fell into our hands, together with a certain amount of war material. For sentimental reasons, it would have been a satisfaction to garrison, if we could not raze to the ground, a town which, though the birthplace of Saladin, had gained an evil reputation throughout the centuries as the home of brutal and boorish folk; their descendants had displayed a callous cruelty to the British and Indian prisoners of the Kut garrison to which every extant narrative of those terrible days bears witness. But our lines of communication were long, and the country devoid of supplies; we withdrew to Samarra on 10th November.

During the first weeks of November, General Maude was in communication with Sir William Robertson regarding the possibility of getting the Russians, under General Baratoff, to hold either the Diyala line or the routes into Persia, on the condition that we maintained them with supplies. He had already been informed by the British liaison officer in the Caucasus that no co-operation was to be expected. 'British gold', ran the telegram,[1] 'may keep the Russian troops in Persia, but it will not make them fight. The old Russian army is dead, quite dead. Our efforts, therefore, to resuscitate it stand useless.'

General Maude, however, still cherished hopes of assistance in this quarter, though it appears now, and to many observers on the spot appeared then, that he had ample forces at his disposal in the country had he wished to make use of them, both to garrison Khanaqin and the Middle and Lower Euphrates, which from Nasiriya to the Hindiya barrage was without a single British garrison. He seemed, to the last, to recoil from the implications involved in his instructions to extend British influence in the Baghdad wilayat. His eyes were on the Turks, his heart set on military success, not from personal ambition—wholly honourable in any man—to make a name in history, but because the training of a lifetime had fitted him to administer and direct troops in the field with the single object of the destruction of the enemy. His relations with Sir Percy Cox had been greatly strained during the summer months. In temperament and in strength of character the two men were not greatly dissimilar, but they were exponents of different aspects of national policy. While General Maude was concerned solely with the military problems of the moment, it was the recognized function and obvious duty of Sir Percy Cox to have regard to the future. General Maude was content to act on the instructions he received from the Imperial General Staff, without considering the ultimate result; it was the business and responsibility of Sir Percy Cox, and later of myself, to endeavour to formulate and to give effect on the spot to a policy which should be consistent with the spirit, rather than the letter, of the sometimes contradictory utterances of the authorized exponents in London of British policy.

General Maude himself was mainly responsible for the decision to take and retain Baghdad, but he was loath to accept the ineluctable

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[1] *O.H.* iv. 37.

Lieut.-Gen. Sir STANLEY MAUDE
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Died 18*th Nov.* 1917

consequences and to develop a civil machine which should help to hold what his military genius and the valour of his troops had gained, though in private letters[1] he referred with pride to his great political responsibilities.

On the 16th November he went to his office as usual, but felt and looked unwell: at 7.45 a.m. he sent for the Staff Surgeon, who prescribed quiet with milk diet. Returning home after lunch he remained at work in his room. At 6 p.m. he was visited by the Consulting Physician, Colonel Willcox, who vetoed Maude's proposal to fulfil an engagement to dine that evening with Colonel Dickson, the Director of Local Resources, a Department in which Maude took particular pride and interest. No serious symptoms were present at that time, but when the Staff Surgeon called in again a little later he noted with concern a change for the worse. Colonel Willcox was summoned afresh, and the diagnosis this time was cholera in a virulent form. Maude had refused to let himself be inoculated, though he insisted that his staff should submit to the process: his excuse was that a man of his age was immune. At about 7.45 p.m. the attack became acute, and in a few minutes a state of extreme collapse occurred. All that medical skill and care could do was of no avail, and at 6.25 p.m. on 18th November he passed away.[2]

No sooner had General Maude's body received the last honours from the garrison and the assembled multitude of Baghdad, than General Head-quarters commenced an inquiry into the causes of his death. It was not enough for them that cholera was at the time endemic in Baghdad, that several military officers, including one of General Hawker's assistants, had died of it, and that it had attacked even the regiment from which the guard on the G.O.C.-in-Chief's house was drawn, and if my information is correct, men who had done duty at the house, nor did it suffice that he had refused inoculation, and that for some time previously his health had not been good. It seemed probable that the cholera infection was contracted on the evening of the 14th November, when he attended a theatrical performance under the auspices of the Alliance Israélite of Baghdad. Afterwards, with other guests, including myself, he took hot coffee, with milk. The suggestion was made that the milk had been of set purpose infected with the germs of cholera. Wild rumours that General Maude had been poisoned were of course current in the bazar immediately after his death (I have seldom, if ever, known a great man in the prime of life die suddenly in Arabia or Persia without some such allegation being made). The rumours were regarded as confirmation of the existence of foul play, and an American war correspondent, in a book published before the Armistice,[1] gave the idea the fullest publicity. Colonel (later Sir William) Willcox, who enjoyed General Maude's confidence and esteem in a quite exceptional degree,[2] has emphatically denied the possibility. 'There is no reason to suspect', he writes, 'that the infection of the milk was other than an accidental infection from the water of the area, which was known to be under great suspicion at the time, cholera being present in that part of the city.'

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[1] See Callwell.

[2] For a full description of his last hours by Colonel Willcox and by the Rev. A. C. E. Jarvis, C.F., see Callwell.

This testimony was disregarded; it was stated that General Hawker's staff officer had deputized for his chief at an entertainment where refreshments were provided by the same contractor who had furnished the coffee and milk for General Maude, and had subsequently contracted cholera. It was pointed out, moreover, that both General Hawker's and General Maude's lives had been threatened in anonymous letters—of the sort that are generally to be found in the post-boxes of prominent men in times of crisis.

After three months' inquiry by the skilled officers of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Civil Police, no evidence whatever was forthcoming; yet the contractor and his assistant, who had some years before been in the service of Messrs. Wonckhaus & Co. (an additional indictment!), were deported as prisoners of war, despite the protests of Sir Percy Cox. 'I was probably', writes General Marshall in his memoirs, with disarming candour, 'indeed almost certainly, unjust in the action I took.' I myself studied the papers in the case with the greatest care, discussed every aspect of the matter at the time with the Criminal Investigation Department, and reached, like them, the conclusion that there was no possibility whatever that foul play had been at work. Like Sir Percy Cox, I was concerned not only with the obvious injustice of the proposed deportations, but with the political effect of the slur thus gratuitously cast upon a section of the population of Baghdad—the Jews—whose attitude and behaviour had at all times been exemplary. The decision came as a sad anti-climax and did us no good.

A scapegoat having thus been provided, no further inquiry was set on foot as to the negligence or otherwise of those in executive medical authority, who had raised no protest against the attendance of the G.O.C.-in-Chief or other military officials at functions in notoriously infected parts of Baghdad, where cholera was known to be endemic, and where at least one British officer had contracted it. The Medical History of the War makes no comment whatever, mentioning simply that General Maude died of cholera in Baghdad. Yet, to quote that most prophetic volume of military stories, *The Green Curve*[1] (p. 266): 'It was no part of the scheme that he should share the hardships of his troops, or any hardships . . . Even against his natural tendencies he was to be preserved from every avoidable danger which might lead to his loss, and from every physical discomfort or exposure which might injure his health and so affect his judgment.' The machine that he had done so much to improve had, by preventive measures, saved the lives of thousands of his men: it failed to save his own life.

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[1] See Egan.

[2] 'I consider his work in improving the health of my forces equal to two Divisions. Whatever it costs in work and in money you must see that the country provides everything that Willcox thinks necessary.' (See Callwell, p. 305.)

The news of his death aroused a concern in Great Britain and throughout the Empire only less deep than that felt throughout the Expeditionary Force which he had so often led to victory. He had become to all ranks the embodiment of victory. It had been his lot to assume command at the moment when the labours of his predecessors were about to reach fruition. By a series of spectacular victories he had obliterated the bitter memories of former defeats; by his powers of organization, added to his close personal relations with the highest authorities in the War Office and in influential quarters at home,[2] he had brought within the reach of all ranks physical comforts to which they had long been strangers. He was to the Army in Mesopotamia what Lord Kitchener was to the British armies in Great Britain and in Europe, and his death, like that of Kitchener, was the occasion for a host of wild rumours. The army that he commanded, like that of Alexander, was not wholly or even mainly professional, and the machine needed animating with a personal feeling. There is no more touching scene in history than that enacted in Babylon when the scarred veterans of fifty battles, who had mutinied for one more look at their idol, filed in silence before the dying king, Alexander, who though speechless could smile recognition and raise a hand when a well-remembered face went by.[3] Would that a similar observance might have marked the passing of General Maude, to inspire generations to come, and to emphasize the personal nature of the office that he held. But there must be reason in hero-worship: let no one think it a miracle that General Maude was victorious; a lesser general could have won as surely, if at more cost, and perhaps only accident robbed Nixon of some of the fame of the conqueror of Baghdad. Maude's military fame will rest on the economy of life which marked his success, not less than on the ever happy dispositions which discomfited his enemies, or on

[1] Published in 1909 by Captain, now Maj.-Gen. Sir Ernest Swinton.

[2] See Callwell, Repington.

[3] Arrian, vii. 26.

the merited fortune that never failed before a river or lost a battle, that never knew a Zama or a Waterloo.

Of the many tributes paid to his memory in Parliament and elsewhere, I will quote briefly Lord Curzon:

> 'Following the Turks with great speed up the Diyala river in one direction, up the Tigris in another, and, at a later date, up the waters of the Euphrates, he inflicted upon them a series of crushing defeats which rendered them incapable of any further sustained military effort. He lifted the danger which overhung the Persian border and which might, unless arrested, have reacted, through Persia, upon Afghanistan and upon India itself, and he occupied the whole of the Baghdad wilayat. And be it remembered that he carried out the series of operations which I have described, labouring under a sense of bitter disappointment at the failure of our Russian allies, who were at that time in the north-west part of Persia, to extend to him the support which he had reason to expect.
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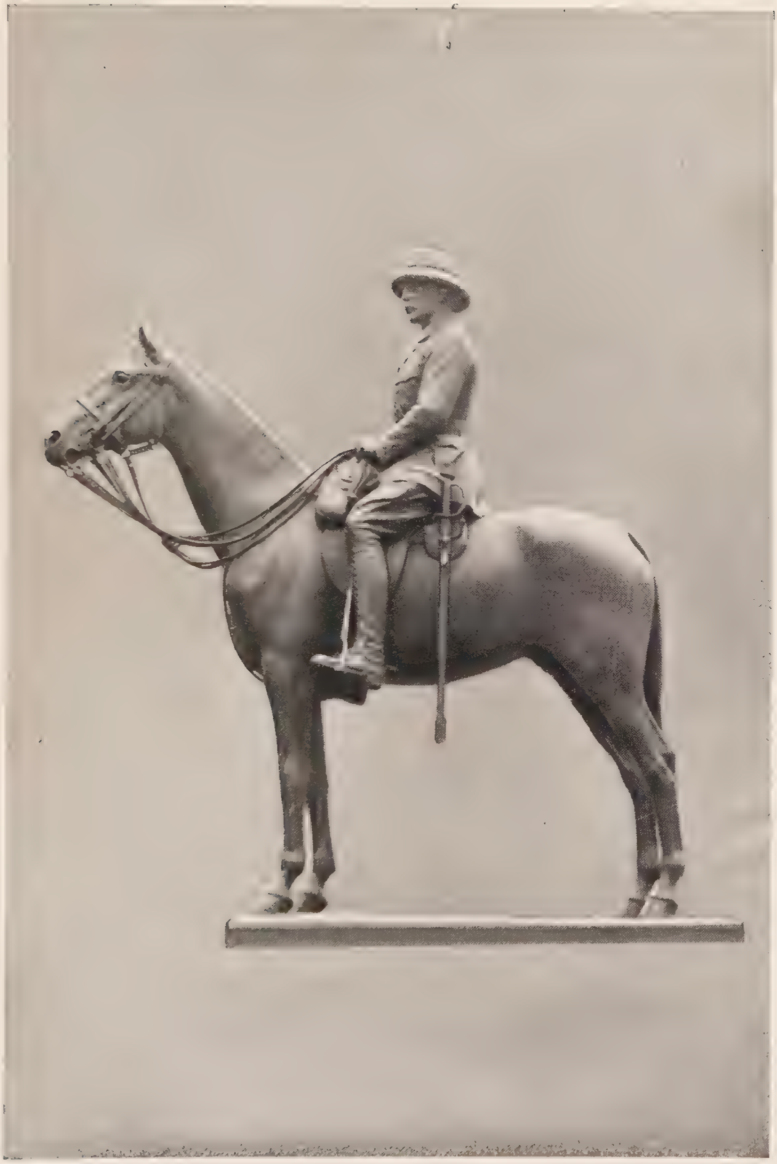
> 'The soul of chivalry, he was not less strict in the discipline that he applied to himself than in that which he applied to others. A non-smoker, almost a total abstainer, he set an example of conscientious self-control which profoundly affected the conduct of those whom he either commanded or who served under him.'

Much more might be written of General Maude's personal charm, and of the Roman quality of *pietas*, deep-rooted in his religion, which informed his life; but I will content myself with recording, as one who served under him, that the criticisms which I have ventured to make have never abated in the smallest degree my admiration for him as a man and a leader of men.

He was buried in Baghdad, in the military cemetery outside the North Gate, and in later years a statue was erected to his memory on the right bank. The inhabitants of 'Iraq subscribed considerable sums for a hospital at Basra which bears his name to-day, and on the Jabal Hamrin an obelisk (now derelict), erected by the 13th Division, couples his name with those of all ranks of the Division whose bodies lie in Mesopotamia.

Like Alexander the Great, who died at Babylon in 323 B.C., and the Roman Emperor Julian, who died at Samarra in A.D. 363, he had conquered the ungrateful soil of Mesopotamia only to become its victim.



Sketch model of equestrian statue by Sir W. Goscombe John, R.A., erected in memory of Lieut.-Gen. Sir Stanley Maude outside the British Residency at Baghdad

CHAPTER XVI

THE BASRA WILAYAT IN 1917

'We shall have failed in our part, have lived almost in vain, if in some direction . . . we have not striven to make the better take the place of the good; life will become for all of us a better and nobler thing, with more definite aims, and greater incentives to useful action.' AUBERON HERBERT. *The Herbert Spencer Lecture*, 1906, p. 39.

Position in Basra. Recruitment of Political Officers. Mr. H. St. J. Philby. Local Contractors. Finance and Accounts. Currency Problems. Accounts System. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Mitra. Government Printing Presses. Public Health Services. Control of Prostitutes. The Qurna, 'Amara, and Muntafiq Divisions. Mungasht Mountains. A visit to 'Arabistan. My departure from Basra. Mr. E. B. Howell.

IT is now necessary to break off the tale of military success in north-western Mesopotamia and to continue the narrative of the growth of the civil administration. It was in 1917 that the administration began to take shape, moulded by the dual and often discordant forces of military exigencies and the demands of the civil population. Though Baghdad was captured in March, little progress was made, for reasons already explained, in extending the sphere of civil government beyond the banks of the two rivers. By April the garrison at Nasiriya had been reduced to five regiments and twenty-four guns, with detachments at Khamisiya and Suq-ash-Shuyukh and at Bani Sa'id, 'Junction Camp', and 'Akaika on the lines of communication. We had no troops at Shatra, nor could we send a political officer there. In Persian territory, on the Karun, there were two Infantry regiments at Ahwaz, with detachments at Shush ('Shushan, the palace' of the Book of Esther), and at Tembi, the pumping-station in the valley a few miles south of the oil-fields. The railway from Basra to Nasiriya was garrisoned by infantry platoons every few miles, as also the railway from Basra to 'Amara, whether completed or under construction.

Basra itself constituted a most complicated and difficult administrative problem. We were fortunate in having as Military Governor and Political Officer Major Meek, of the Bombay Political Department, a competent and clear-headed man with considerable magisterial experience in Aden and elsewhere, a good knowledge of Arabic, and a temper that nothing could ruffle. He was assisted at Zubair by Lieutenant MacCollum and in 'Ashar by the stout-bodied and stout-hearted Captain MacDermott. The town itself, and the suburb of 'Ashar and every yard of dry ground for miles round were crowded with administrative and non-combatant units, Prisoner of War Camps, Ordnance, Supply, Transport, Stationery, Red Cross, and Veterinary and other depots, Machine Gun, Stokes Mortar, and Musketry Schools. There were a dozen or so Labour Corps—Persian, Arab, Egyptian, and Indian—Porter Corps for stevedoring work; hospitals occupied every available site on the river bank, and overflowed to Mohammerah. ʿAmara, too, was overcrowded, and thirty or forty languages could be heard within the space of a few yards in the bazar, talked by khaki-clad 'details' from up-stream, by men on a few hours' leave from the Labour Corps. Amongst the latter, under the strict but kindly supervision of Colonel W. B. Lane, were several Indian Jail Corps, composed of such of the criminal fraternity as were able-bodied and willing to earn a substantial remission of their sentence in this way. Many were professional thieves, and taught the local Arab a few lessons in an art in which he had hitherto regarded himself as *hors concours*. For the most part, however, they gave little serious trouble, thanks to the remarkable competence of those in charge. At Shaikh Saʿad there was still a large military camp with two hospitals; and all along the river from Fao to Kut, at Qurna, Mudalil, ʿAli Gharbi, Wadi, and Hanna, detachments of varying sizes were posted. Between them, in many cases, were large labour camps busy constructing roads and embankments. Apart from and independent of them, the ubiquitous I.W.T. officers pursued their lawful occasions, setting up steering marks on shore—complaining when they were pulled down next night by some mischievous youth, buoying the river, salvaging craft, and endeavouring like the seven maids with seven mops to sweep away the sandy bars by bandalling the river. Each of these branches of the service had its own contacts with the local population, and each made its own demands on the time and patience of the local political officer, who already had a full day's work on the judicial and administrative sides. Night-watchmen had to be enlisted, local police engaged, and labour obtained, not without tears, from the local tribes; municipalities required nursing; the blockade measures needed watching, and endless petitioners demanded a patient hearing. The strain was very great, and not all those who had felt themselves called to the work could stand it. It became intensified when Baghdad fell and we had to supply Sir Percy Cox's immediate needs for political officers. We lost thus Major Macpherson, who had been Assistant Political Officer with military formations both on the Karun and the Tigris, had organized *shabana* (local police) below ʿAmara, and had later taken over from Lorimer as Political Officer at ʿAmara; he was attached to the Cavalry Division in the operations leading to the capture of Baghdad, went with it to Falluja, and later, after a few months' leave in India for convalescence after enteric and double dysentery was posted to Hilla. His place at ʿAmara was taken by Major C. F. Mackenzie.

W. C. F. A. Wilson, as already mentioned, was posted to Kut. Bullard and Garbett from the Revenue Office went to Baghdad, and Barrett from ʻAli Gharbi to Baquba.

I had foreseen the possibility of this call on our resources and had managed to obtain from General MacMunn a limited number of officers to understudy those earmarked for transfer up-river. The Force included in its ranks, especially in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, an extraordinary variety of talent, and with the cordial co-operation of Brig.-Gen. Campbell of the Third Echelon, we were able to turn some of it into fruitful channels. There were many European police officers of the Imperial and Provincial Police Services of India, and engineers, accountants, customs officials, and others with a creditable knowledge of Arabic were forthcoming in unexpected numbers: most of them had acquired linguistic fluency in commercial pursuits in Egypt, but a few had studied in India. There were, too, a few political officers and junior members of the Indian Civil Service. From among them selections were made, and the result was creditable and satisfactory. But men so selected obviously could not fill the senior posts, to man which we had to go further afield. From Egypt and the Sudan we obtained for the judicial service Bonham-Carter, Bell, Bros, and Drower; and Balfour and Nalder for administrative work. From India came Warburton, Williamson, Norton, and Bles, all of the Indian Civil Service. The War Office sent us several men, all with Egyptian experience, including Cooke, Roberts, Suter, Ditchburn, Rabino, and Sciama.

Mr. Dobbs had been invalided to India in October 1916; his place as Revenue Commissioner was taken for a time, in November 1916, by Mr. Philby, who had exceptional qualifications for work in Arab-speaking countries. He had obtained in India the Degree of Honour for Arabic, amongst other languages; the fiery temper which had characterized him in earlier years had been mellowed by experience, and was now an asset in time of need rather than a disability. He was industrious and methodical in his analyses of the problems with which he had to deal, but his logical mind led him on occasion to positions which sometimes seemed doctrinaire to those who had to make hasty decisions based on expediency. Had we been more closely associated, more might have been accomplished. He was one of those men who are apt to assume that everything they come across, from a government to a fountain-pen, is constructed on wrong principles and capable of amendment. He, too, was summoned to Baghdad soon after its occupation to assist Sir Percy Cox at his head-quarters, his place at Basra being taken by Mr. Evelyn Howell.

In October Mr. Philby was deputed to Central Arabia on a mission to Ibn Saʿud, of which he has given a full account in his published works,[1] which have ensured him an honoured place in the ranks of travellers in and historians of Arabia. It was with unfeigned regret that at a later stage in the campaign I witnessed his departure from Mesopotamia at the urgent instance of the Government of India, for though we did not always agree (nor was he at pains to conceal his dissent), I respected his ability and his intellectual honesty.

The problem of the civil administration of the Basra wilayat was, as already remarked, twofold: on the one hand I was Sir Percy Cox's deputy, with head-quarters at Basra, on the other virtually a Staff Officer of the Inspector-General of Communications, whose administrative responsibilities extended to Shush and the oil-fields in Persia, to Nasiriya on the Euphrates, and to Baghdad on the Tigris. We both did our best to decentralize, and to delegate work as far as possible to our respective representatives in the different areas, but, if only for financial reasons, it was vital to ensure uniform treatment of cognate questions—claims for compensation, for rent, and for loss of river craft, animals &c., requisitioned. We had some responsibility, too, for the purchases of local supplies from contractors by the Supply Officers at various centres. The emphasis placed by General Head-quarters on the importance of making the greatest possible use of the resources of the country, regardless of cost, led to anomalous situations. Contractors formed rings and forced individual Supply Officers at centres where the need was greatest to pay unreasonable prices; no effort was spared to corrupt subordinate officials, and unremitting vigilance was essential. We were, for example, urged by India to restrict our demands for *ghi* (clarified butter for cooking) and to draw on local supplies. Local contractors bought large quantities of inferior *ghi* in the market in Karachi, shipped it to Mohammerah and thence to Ahwaz, put it into local containers, and sold it as local produce to the Supply Officer there, thus defeating the whole object of the local purchase campaign.

Life was too short, and the day's work too long, to have recourse to the civil courts to punish such offences, nor was it easy to frame contracts in such a way as to cover the innumerable subterfuges in which local contractors rejoiced. Black Lists were of no avail, for the offender could at a moment's notice merge his identity in that of another firm, or of 'a trusty friend who did not mind'. It is, however, only fair to say that the great majority of local merchants, and nearly all the bigger firms, dealt honourably with us; certain it is that without their aid we should have fared far worse.

So long as I remained at Basra the political mess was open, as in 1916, to all comers of the civil administration passing through in either direction, and I was thus able to put up many officers of military units. I renewed some old friendships in this way, and made many new ones; I was able to keep in touch with current events on the military side, and to hear betimes of men whose services might with advantage be obtained for the civil administration. By means of a card-index I retained a permanent record of the identity and characteristics of nearly every one I met, as well as of any man of promise of whom I heard, and thus over a period of three years amassed a vast amount of valuable information regarding individuals, drawn from the lips of their comrades. Later, when it was necessary to select men for appointments of responsibility, this record was to prove invaluable.

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[1] See Bibliography.

The financial and accounting side of the administration (at this time under Lieutenant C. T. Beale) had by the end of 1916 become important. We were collecting, with little difficulty, considerable sums in revenue in the sanjaqs of Basra and ʽAmara, and a certain amount even in Nasiriya. The Customs Department, in the very competent hands of that most genial of tax-gatherers, Mr. C. R. Watkins, was collecting large sums. Turkish Crown properties, excise, and other sources of revenue showed a steady increase. Money flowed freely, thanks to the immense demand for labour and for local produce. The first step, early in 1915, was to establish a Civil Treasury at Basra, into which all receipts from whatever source were paid, and from which all monies were disbursed, special funds of all sorts being severely discountenanced. The next step was to provide banking facilities. For purely technical reasons the Imperial Ottoman Bank's branch at Basra was treated as 'hostile' and we were unable to make use of it; for other reasons, also of a purely technical nature, we could not invite the Imperial Bank of Persia to function as the official bank to the civil administration. The Government of India therefore arranged for a third institution, the 'Eastern Bank', which had a branch at Baghdad before the war, to start a branch at Basra, where it opened its doors on 30th September 1915. In November 1916 it opened a branch at ʽAmara. On 24th April 1917, it reopened its branch at Baghdad in the premises of the Deutsche Bank, and in May 1919 opened a branch at Mosul. For the first two years of the occupation the Civil Treasury dealt only with Civil Funds, and as that part of expenditure which was represented by salaries was for the most part credited to the recipients' accounts with Banks in India or the United Kingdom, there was a substantial surplus of cash to help finance the Military Accounts Department, whose requirements were very large. Later on, in 1917, the Civil Administration became responsible for the supply of the currency required by all Military Departments, which intimated their cash requirements for each ensuing month, together with a forecast of later needs. The problem with which we were confronted was to provide the Occupied Territory with a new currency, for the Turks, as already explained, had contrived to collect most of the silver and gold and to issue notes in exchange. When Baghdad was unexpectedly occupied in March 1917 the machinery came very near breaking down, for there was no cash in reserve against such a contingency. The Government of India was scarcely able to meet the enormously increased demand for rupees consequent on overseas operations in Egypt, East Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia, and on the expansion of the internal demand for currency in India as a result of the war. Rupees, indeed, were being packed in boxes and dispatched from the Mint while still, literally, hot from the press. India had therefore refused to allow us any reserve, and had enjoined on us the vital necessity of encouraging the circulation of paper money. We had done so very successfully in the Basra wilayat, and in areas far beyond our control, such as Samawa, Shatra, and Hai, rupee notes were invariably accepted at par, even in the dark days of 1916. It was, however, scarcely to be expected that the tribes of the Baghdad wilayat, or even the merchants, who had long been deprived of Turkish silver currency, would at the outset accept Indian notes with complacency.

Yet the available supplies of rupees were unequal to the minimum needs of Baghdad, and it would be a month before further supplies could arrive from India. About 1st March I received an intimation as to the amount required in connexion with the advance, and held a hasty council with the I.G.C. and the Military Accounts Officer at the Base. We decided to reduce our cash balances at Basra, ʿAmara, and Nasiriya to a few thousands of rupees at each place, and to ship the rest up-stream by a fast boat. But the amount thus obtained was still quite inadequate. Appeal was made to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and to the branches of the Imperial Bank of Persia at Mohammerah and Bushire; they responded to the best of their powers. The Civil Treasury at Bushire could not help; their resources were already drained by the military detachments there. I telegraphed to Koweit and Bahrain, and managed, with the assistance of the Navy, to get up several lakhs of rupees at very short notice. There was still plenty of cash fructifying in the pockets of the local populace, but it would obviously have been dangerous to take any public steps to advertise our needs. After communication with the Bank Managers, recourse was had to a stratagem. It was announced that payments for Telegraphic Transfers on Bombay would in future be accepted at the Civil Treasury at Basra only in notes, those paying in large notes having preference, the reason given privately being that we were very short of *sarrafs* or cashiers; to add verisimilitude to the tale several sarrafs were sent up-river, nominally under orders for Baghdad. We provided the banks with ample supplies of notes of large denomination, and asked them to remit us the proceeds in cash daily. The ruse was entirely successful, and enough, but only just enough, currency reached Baghdad to prevent a crisis.

It was well that Advanced Headquarters had not been stinted, for no sooner was the force established than long queues of Baghdad merchants and their clerks lined up at the Field Treasuries to obtain rupees for the notes that they had been hoarding. Most of the first notes presented were pre-war issues, but, not a little to our surprise, quite a large proportion bore the stamp of the Civil Treasury at Basra for 1915 and 1916. Enterprising merchants had been busy buying at a discount, with Indian notes, Turkish gold, the possession of which was a penal offence under Turkish law, and smuggling it back to Basra either through the marshes or via Persia. The risks of the business must have been considerable, but the demand for gold coins amongst the well-to-do was insatiable, and a remarkable example of *auri sacra fames*. It never occurred to us to ask Simla or Whitehall for supplies of gold for payments to Arabs, on the scale adopted by our officers on the Red Sea coast and at ʿAqaba. Ibn Saʿud, indeed, stirred to envy by the reports of vast sums in gold lavished by the political officers attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force,[1] once asked that we should make our payments to him in future in gold. We replied firmly that there was nothing that gold could buy which could not be purchased equally well with silver, and in a short time we were able to arrange for his allotted subsidy to be credited to the account of his agent in Bombay. Ibn Saʿud was always a business-like monarch, with business men as his advisers.

To revert to currency matters in Baghdad. Within a few days the supply of rupees was almost exhausted, and there were signs that currency notes would be at discount if prompt measures were not taken. The same remedy was applied as at Basra. The merchants anxious to order goods were clamouring for Telegraphic Transfers. They were told that they could be issued only against rupee notes, preferably those of Rs. 1,000. They hastened to purchase these from the banks with specie, and Rs. 1,000 notes went to a premium and remained above par for some months. Later in the year there was again a shortage of rupee currency: we countered it by refusing to accept payment of revenue except in notes—rupees, it was explained, were intended to remain in circulation; we had no use for them in the

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[1] See (Lowell) Thomas (p. 249): 'Boxes of sovereigns—gold conscripted from every corner of the Empire to help to arouse enthusiasm in the breasts of the temperamental Beduin whenever the spirits of those rather fickle gentlemen began to flag.'

Treasury. This reversal of Turkish custom had its due effect; the Shaikhs and merchants soon realized that it was safer and cheaper to send half-notes about the country than cash, and by the end of 1917 the Indian note issue was firmly established everywhere in the Occupied Territories and far beyond.

On the accounts side the amount of work had steadily increased. Each district political officer was responsible for the payment of wages to local police and night-watchmen, to municipal staffs, and for innumerable disbursements on behalf of the military departments. The Police Department had several hundred men in uniform, and the Judicial Department, the Jails, the Blockade staff, and half a dozen other offshoots of the administration, not to mention the Customs, were handling large sums. Altogether there were, at the end of 1916, over a hundred offices in account with the Civil Treasury. It was vitally necessary to systematize accounts, and to post the Base ledgers in such a way as to enable a proper check to be kept on receipts and disbursements. For some time we had no option but to send them all to the Controller of War Accounts at Calcutta, who dealt with them as best he could, and sent us, after many months, compiled statements showing how we stood. Even this was almost more than we could perform, for accounts had to be kept in English in order to be understood in India, and in any case it was impossible during the war to obtain even reasonably competent Arab accounting-clerks; such men were eagerly sought for by business houses, which offered salaries and prospects with which no government could compete. Simplicity in accounting was essential, for the officers concerned had very little time for paper work, and their hard-worked clerks were seldom competent to do more than keep a simple cash account. It was impressed on all officers, at the very outset, that their reputation would in large measure depend on the accuracy and punctuality with which they submitted their accounts, and on their observance of all prescribed formalities. All expenditure on salaries had to be sanctioned in writing by the competent authority, viz. the Chief Political Officer or his deputy, or, in case of expenditure debitable to the Army, by the competent military authority. The amount of correspondence involved was enormous, and it irked over-worked officers, their patience exhausted by endless journeys, tedious interviews, and long hours in Court, to sit down after dinner to handle the mass of routine papers dealing with expenditure. It was, however, essential to maintain uniform scales of payment in different areas for similar services, and to check expenditure at out-stations; and the Revenue Commissioner and I, in our respective capacities, were rigorous in our demands.

Early in 1917 the Controller of War Accounts, Mr. Bhupendra

Nath Mitra (later Sir B. N. Mitra, K.C.I.E., and a Member of the Viceroy's Council), came to Basra on an official tour of inspection and investigation, accompanied by Mr. J. Parlby of the Indian Military Finance Department and several assistants. The inquisition of this eminent Indian official lacked nothing in thoroughness; he and his staff scrutinized our ledgers, checked the bulky tomes of vouchers, counted cash balances, not only at head-quarters but at out-stations, noting every irregularity and every departure from the letter of the regulations which we had imposed on ourselves. Many years have passed, but I still recollect the deep satisfaction with which I received Mr. Mitra's announcement that we had not been found wanting. He had traced only one financial irregularity, for which I myself was responsible. It related to an item of 47 rupees 10 annas, which the Military Accounts Department had for some reason refused to adjust; to avoid correspondence I had debited it to 'Secret Service Funds', which were subject to audit only by the Controller. I begged him to forget it, and offered to refund the amount from my own pocket, but he was adamant, and in due course conveyed to me a rebuke from the Government of India, coupled with a very warm letter of appreciation of the efforts we had made to keep our finances straight, and to administer the country with economy. Shortly after his return, the Government of India gave us, on his recommendation, much wider financial powers, and Mr. Parlby, who is (1930) still serving in Mesopotamia, was lent to keep us in the straight and narrow paths of financial rectitude and sound accountancy. It was a laborious and thankless task, which he performed with a steady zeal which inspired and still inspires my admiration.

From 1915 to 1920 the table of the chief civil authority was heaped with evidences of human turpitude in every department of life. Of the nobler aspects of men's deeds we saw, on paper, but little; there was none to record them, nor any object in doing so. I am, however, proud to say that from first to last not a single 'officer' of the civil administration, British, Arab, or Indian, whether covenanted or uncovenanted, was suspected, far less convicted, of malversation. Great sums of money were being handled in circumstances which made peculation easy; that the administration escaped unscathed is a tribute alike to the probity of individuals and to the sound scheme of travelling audit and central accounting which was from the first the keystone of our financial system.

Mr. Mitra's visit was helpful in other ways: he endeared himself to all and sundry in the Political Mess at Basra by his affability and modesty and by the common sense with which he approached his task. No one was less bound by the trammels of his office, or by the letter of the regulations; no one was more anxious to forward the prosecution of the war in every way possible. If the Government of India had shown in 1915, in their collective capacity, the helpful and zealous spirit that inspired him, we should have heard little in Parliament and elsewhere of Indian inefficiency.

I have already, in Chapter V, referred to the genesis of *The Basra Times* and its younger sister *The Baghdad Times*. As the size of the force increased, the demands on *The Basra Times* press, which we acquired from the owner at a valuation, increased rapidly. Large numbers of forms were required by the military authorities, and when in 1915 shipping delays became acute the Base Stationery Office found itself compelled to obtain an increasing proportion of its requirements locally. It was clear that either the Army must put up a press of its own, or the civil administration must do so, for joint military and civil needs. The latter course was decided on, and in April 1916 Mr. C. F. Weakford, of the Government of India Central Press, Calcutta, arrived to take charge of the press at Basra. He was an expert compositor and a skilled printer, with a thorough knowledge of machinery and paper, and, it may be added, of men, with an unusual capacity for thinking ahead and planning developments on an adequate scale. The number and efficiency of printing machines installed steadily increased, and with it the staff of compositors, British, Indian, and Arab. One of its most ambitious ventures, *'Iraq in War Time*, would have done credit to almost any press in India; many thousand copies were sold. The press soon began to make stereo plates of current military and civil forms, so that supplies could be printed as required, to avoid waste when forms were changed. The sizes of the form and the quality of paper were standardized, and the zeal of that ever numerous band whose joy it is to add another column to a form was severely restrained. The Base Stationery Office soon found it cheaper to get work done on the spot as and when required than to indent on Calcutta. Binding was undertaken, and presently the press ventured on half-tone blocks. On the occupation of Baghdad we were able to transfer from the Base several machines which we had in readiness for the occasion, and Mr. Weakford went up in charge of the Baghdad Government Press, his place at Basra being taken by Mr. D. G. Parry. By 1918 its output was larger than that of the Basra press; it was equipped with modern monotype and linotype machines and could print in four languages and three colours.

The press at Basra was eventually taken over by a limited liability company, and *The Basra Times* became *The Times of Mesopotamia*: both papers have continued to prosper, though the path of journalism in 'Iraq has not always been either felicitous or unsophisticated. The printing press at Baghdad, but not *The Baghdad Times* was taken over by the Arab Government in 1921 and maintained as a government institution: it was and still is of great value as a civilizing agency and as the efficient handmaid of a civilized government.

Public Health and Quarantine Services claimed rather more attention in 1917 than they had received in previous years, though much less than they deserved or subsequently received. The municipal areas of Basra and ʿAshar were grossly overcrowded: hundreds of houses were occupied by the army; scores had been demolished to make new roads or widen existing ones. Many of the available areas of high ground out of reach of the annual floods had been occupied by military camps; the remainder were overcrowded. We had as yet been unable to provide the civil population with any sort of water-supply, and the canals, which had sufficed for the smaller population before the war, became fetid with the additional traffic on them and were, moreover, in many cases blocked by military culverts which prevented the scouring of the tides. In our efforts to make military areas better we generally made other areas worse. Plague made its appearance in the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917, smallpox broke out in 1917, and cholera in May 1918, and in the same month there was a recrudescence of plague: plague and smallpox threatened to become endemic, and the acute congestion of the whole area made precautionary measures exceedingly difficult. Malaria, from which the inhabitants had suffered but little before the war, grew steadily more common, having presumably been introduced from India, and was responsible in 1918 for 7 per cent. of the deaths recorded in the area.

Finally, the pandemic of influenza which, beginning in Spain in the spring of 1918, spread northwards through Europe and eastward to India, began to be evident in Basra in September. The death-rate rose sharply to a figure not previously recorded even in the cholera epidemic of the previous May. Yet Basra and Mesopotamia as a whole suffered little in comparison with Europe or Persia. In the last-named region the ravages of pneumonia, supervening on influenza, were terrible: the disease struck impartially the healthiest able-bodied men, magnificent specimens, and their women-kind. It decimated the nomad tribes, Bakhtiari and Lur, Arab and Qashqai, and within a few months caused a greater loss of life than had been suffered in four years of strife.

The Port Health or Quarantine Office was, like the Government Press, managed by the Civil Administration on behalf of the army, and served the purposes of both. During 1917 an average of 100 ships arrived monthly and twenty ships were always in harbour. Almost all the ships arrived in quarantine from India, some of them plague-stricken. In 1918 severe outbreaks of influenza occurred on board ships in harbour and in quarantine; in one case more than half of the crew were struck down. Few of the ships had any medical officer on board, and the Port Health Officer (Captain G. Finch[1]) was for practical purposes in permanent medical charge of a floating population of some 3,000 persons, few of whom remained in port for more than ten days, after which their place was taken by others.

The inspection of corpses in transit from Persia and India to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, and of batches of pilgrims for the same destination, and the control of public women in the interests of public health, were other branches of work for which the civil medical authorities, in the person of Captain D. F. Borrie, the Civil Surgeon, and Captain F. T. H. Wood, Health Officer, were responsible. They did their work magnificently, in circumstances of great difficulty, as transport was always scarce, and the heat and the glare in summer on the river very hard to bear. Civil hospital accommodation was almost unobtainable, and even mat-huts difficult to improvise owing to the scarcity of suitable sites. In such times doctors suffer more than other men, for they see suffering which is hidden from the great majority: they know what should be done, but are powerless to do it. *Video meliora proboque*, *deteriora sequor*, is their cry. I am bound to say that the civil medical men were, from the first, far more importunate in their demands than their military colleagues seem to have been in 1914 and 1915, and if ever I appeared to them to relax my endeavours to meet their needs I was faced with an indignant professional deputation, who backed their demands with prophecies of the wrath to come that would have done credit to the priesthood of a bygone age. I owed so much to them in my own person, and knew so well what they were doing and why, that I forgave them, and, like the unjust judge, complied with their demands if possible.

The control of the professional prostitutes, some 180 in number, was a particularly difficult matter. The Army authorities, from the very outset, refused to 'recognize' any women, or to 'control' them. Their houses were 'out of bounds', and the Provost-Marshal's men were on hand to enforce the rule. But clandestine traffic was easy, and its detection or prevention impossible. Deportation of offenders was suggested, but rejected on practical grounds. Such medical inspection as was possible was arranged in the interest of the civil population and of non-combatants by the civil medical services. The success of the policy adopted by the Army was its justification. Venereal disease remained throughout the years 1914–20 at a far lower figure than in Egypt or in India, both among British and other troops.[2] The only serious outbreak was at Baku in 1918.

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[1] He died in harness on 8th October 1918.

[2] See Sir W. G. Macpherson.

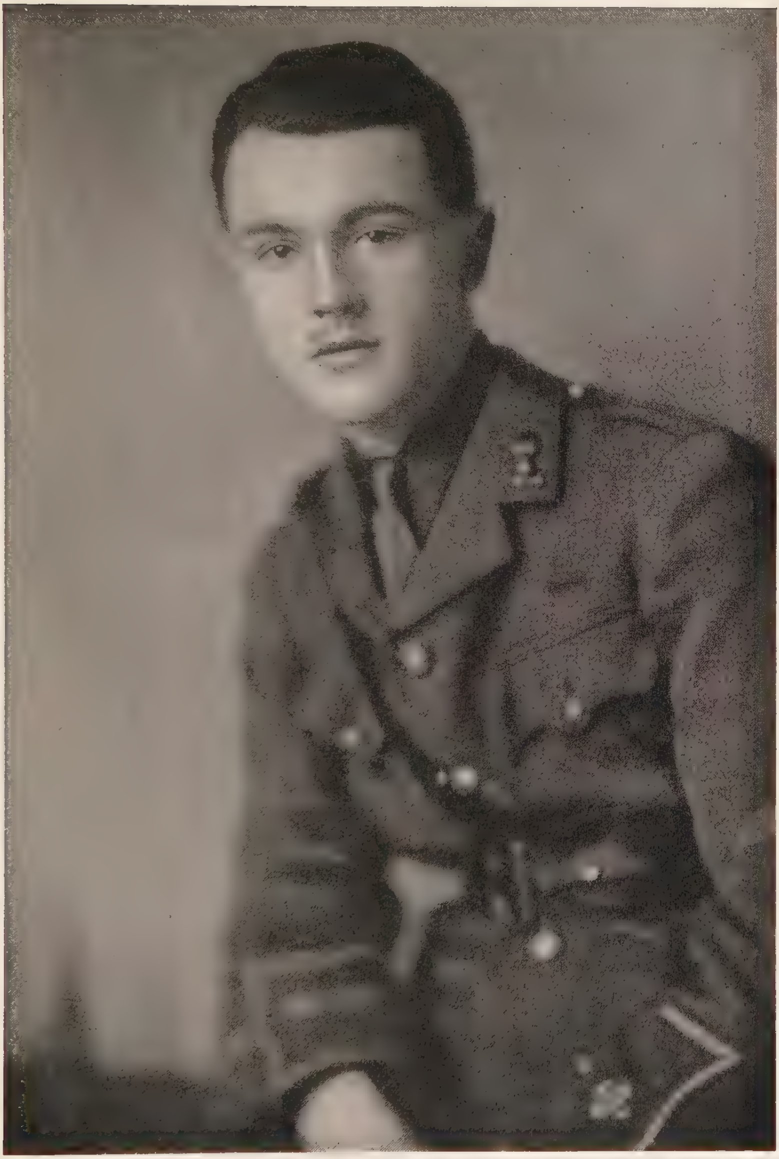

Photo by Dorothy Hickling

LIEUT. E. A. W. HAWKE

Killed Dec. 27th 1918

Outside the town of Basra, in the sanjaqs of Qurna, ʿAmara, and Nasiriya great changes took place beneath the surface during 1917. Baghdad having been captured, the tribesmen accepted the new régime for the most part as an accomplished fact, with which they had no desire to quarrel. The laborious preliminary work of collecting information—geographical, statistical, economic, and personal—began to bear fruit. The outlook of the political officers was insensibly changed; the aphorism of Pascal, 'gagnez les cœurs, les affaires sont moins importantes que les hommes' began for the first time to be a practicable policy. The affairs of the state—the *res publica*—had been settled for the time being; it was time to look after the *res privata*. In the Qurna Division much time was devoted to the assessment of the damage done by military operations; it was a tedious task, but vital to the rehabilitation of civil life. Whole date-gardens had been cut down, and the face of the ground so changed that owners did not know where their boundaries had been. Great areas of land had been commandeered for wharves, railway sidings, and military camps; the level of the ground had in places been so raised as to make it impossible to replant them with trees; elsewhere deep borrow-pits, from which soil had been taken for reclamation purposes, were full of stagnant water in which mosquitoes bred freely—mosquitoes whose bite seemed more deadly than before the occupation.

The dredging of a channel across the Hammar Lake, to which reference has been made elsewhere, brought numerous difficult problems in its train. The construction of a railway from Basra to ʿAmara took from the fields almost every able-bodied man in the Qurna district. The *nahiyas* or rural districts of the sanjaq were constituted according to the Turkish system.[1] Tribal chiefs were put in charge of the majority of these *nahiyas*, in accordance with our settled policy, but to select the right man was no easy task. Some districts were occupied by several tribes, who would recognize no one chief; others were inhabited by one tribe, who were at issue with their titular leader but would accept no other. In one case the experiment was made of appointing an ex-Turkish official as *Mudir*, but before long he proved to be making a living by protecting train thieves.

In another *nahiya*—Kubáish—the leading Shaikh, Salim al Khayyun, a popular but turbulent figure, had been sent to India as a prisoner of war in December 1916. His brother proved unsatisfactory, nor could we find an adequate successor. Finally a leading member of a Basra family, Salih al Hajjaj, was induced to accept the position of *Mustashar* or adviser to Shaikh Salim's younger brother, Falih, pending Salim's return from India. Salih showed from the outset ability, tact, and firmness in handling the affairs of the district and his young ward.

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[1] 1. Sakrikha; 2. Nuhairat, Bani Mansur, and Muzairaʿ; 3. Suwaib; 4. Nashwa; 5. Dair; 6. Sharish; 7. Madina; 8. Kubáish; 9. Bani Hutait; 10. Maʿdan.

Each *nahiya* had its own problems, of which the foregoing are but samples; it is enough to say here that the responsibility for finding a solution rested, at this period, almost wholly on the shoulders of the Political Officer, Captain J. B. Mackie, who after some months spent in the district as Assistant Political Officer suceeded Major W. C. F. A. Wilson in May and justified his selection.

Nearly £10,000 was obtained in revenue during the year from this Division—a sum larger than the Turks had ever succeeded in collecting; no serious difficulty was experienced in getting it in: the tribesmen were earning more money in a month than they had previously seen in a year, and were sometimes puzzled to know how to spend it. A large proportion of it was invested, rather than expended, in silver ornaments for their women-kind, made by that most interesting sect, the *Subbis*, or Sabaeans.[1]

During 1917 the Basra–Qurna section of the Basra–ʿAmara railway was completed. It involved the construction of a floating pontoon bridge over the Qurmat ʿAli creek, north of Maʿqil, with improvised material. A daily rise and fall of tide of over five feet introduced an additional complication. The bridge was commenced in August and finished in October 1917, the engineer-in-charge being Lt.-Col. P. Rothera, O.B.E. It proved a thoroughly satisfactory job, withstanding the heavy floods of 1918, and took a 50-ton locomotive without difficulty. The engine was placed centrally in the train, and was preceded by three loaded and three empty vehicles, and followed by three empty trucks, so as to reduce the load on each span. By the end of the year the railway from Basra to Qurna was completed, the Euphrates at Qurna being crossed by a pile bridge with a central movable span.

In the ʿAmara Division, too, for the same reasons as those already mentioned, conditions improved rapidly during 1917. The tribes settled down to peaceful pursuits with astonishing rapidity, and in the three districts of ʿAli Gharbi (D. Willey), ʿAmara (Major R. O. Harvey), and Qilat Salih (Captain S. E. Hedgecock), each managed by an Assistant Political Officer, there was little or no organized banditry. Adventurous spirits caused us anxiety from time to time by raiding the flocks and herds of the adherents of the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh and of the Shaikh of Mohammerah, resuscitating, in justification of their action, age-long blood feuds, and alleging grazing-rights that ante-dated and were independent of demarcated frontiers; they were able, too, to prove past aggressions on their own flocks by the horsemen of the Bairanwand from the Kabir Kuh and of the Khasraj from the Karkha. Stern measures of repression were not called for, and would have defeated their object; arbitrators were appointed, and a cash settlement arranged, the bulk of which was paid, after impassioned protests, by the chiefs of the Bani Lam.

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[1] For a full description of their origin and history, with an ample bibliography, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*: for an entertaining and well-informed account of Subbis to-day, see Stevens.

Trade with Persia through Pusht-i-Kuh via ʻAli Gharbi reached considerable dimensions, owing to the closure of the Kirmanshah–Khanaqin route, and did something to relieve the extreme scarcity of cash. This shortage was one of the primary reasons of the increasing misery prevalent in Kirmanshah and Hamadan, which led, in the following year, to one of the most terrible famines that has ever afflicted Persia, surpassing in severity the awful visitation of 1872.

The possibilities of irrigation were systematically studied by officers of the Irrigation Department, which was constituted during the year under the aegis of the Quartermaster-General's Department, and certain works were undertaken in order to keep as much water as possible in the river, to assist navigation. These works, hastily constructed without proper study, did much harm to the rice-fields, and large areas were thrown out of cultivation; nor was there a corresponding improvement in the régime of the Tigris, which obstinately refused to respond to treatment on these lines. At the end of 1917 the question of the supply of pitching stone for the protection of the railway bridges on the ʻAmara line became urgent, and early in 1918 a branch line on metre gauge was run from Zubair station to Jabal Sanam, a solitary cone-shaped hill some thirty miles south-west of Basra. The mass of the hill consisted of rocks belonging to the ʻOman series, of a geological age ranging from Carboniferous to Triassic. Overlying these older rocks unconformably are sandstones and grits of the Upper Tors, and later Miocene or Pliocene age, and some limestone, probably Eocene.[2] By the end of 1919 over 1½ million cubic feet of stone and more than this quantity of shingle and sand had been excavated and dispatched to Basra.

Compensation for lands taken over for military purposes was assessed, and steady, if slow, progress was made in adjusting blood feuds, which seem to have been encouraged by the Turks; I know not who it was[2] who first enunciated the principle 'divide et impera', but it is surely one of the most fallacious sayings that ever found a place in the copy-book of rulers.

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[1] *Vide* report by Dr. G. E. Pilgrim: Lubbock, p. 118.

[2] It is, according to Benham's *Dictionary of Quotations*, 'a traditional saying' without classical authority; the earliest reference to it in English literature is by Lord Chancellor Bacon, who mentions 'that cunning old maxim "separa et impera" '.

The local resources of the Division were heavily drawn on during 1916 and 1917, not less than 1,000 cattle and 50,000 sheep being sold to the army of occupation during two years, a number much in excess of the normal surplus, with the result that the number of ewes that remained for breeding purposes proved insufficient to maintain the flocks in their pre-war numbers. Agents were sent further afield, to Pusht-i-Kuh and Luristan, and even into the Bakhtiari country, some 300 miles distant, but these areas could only be drawn upon during the cold weather, and I had to represent on more than one occasion to the Directorate of Local Resources, now fully organized under Brig.-Gen. Dickson, the importance of limiting his demands on the tribes of the Tigris for sheep and cattle during the winter months, if a severe shortage in 1918 and 1919 was to be avoided.

In the Muntafiq[1] or Nasiriya Division progress during 1917 was less apparent. Only the Nasiriya district and that of Suq-ash-Shuyukh (Captain R. A. Haysom) were fully pacified or effectively administered. The vast majority of the inhabitants are tribesmen, warlike by nature, jealous of their freedom, and unwilling to undertake any manual labour not directly connected with agriculture.

Except for the purely nomadic tribesmen of the Dhafir, the inhabitants consisted of three main groups—the Ajwad, the Bani Malik, and the Bani Saʿid. The Ajwad, under the titular leadership of Zamil al Mannaʿ, included the Bani Richab and Al Humaid confederacies, together with a multitude of scattered tribes. The Bani Malik, whose titular head was the elusive Badr al Rumaiyith, consisted of the confederacies of the Bani Khaiqan, Majarra, and Al bu Salih. The Bani Saʿid under ʿUlaiwi al Mirhij and Sikar al Naʿama were an ill-assorted group of wandering tribes who inhabited the desert land lying between the Tigris, the Shatt-al-Gharraf, the Shatt-al-Badaʿ, and the Hammar Lake.

To impose the rule of law upon these dissonant and intractable elements was by far the most difficult of the many problems of the civil administration in the Basra wilayat. The tribesmen had never felt the weight of our arms; the punitive expeditions occasionally undertaken by the army of occupation had proved uniformly abortive and served rather to emphasize our military limitations than to demonstrate our ability to govern. The Division had suffered little at the hands of the Turkish or British armies; in every direction uncharted marshes and networks of canals serving great areas of irrigated lands offered impassable obstacles to the passage of organized forces. It was impossible to refrain altogether from the thorny task of government: the tribes were prosperous, and to refrain as our predecessors had done from collecting revenue, whilst taking it from the inhabitants of the Qurna and 'Amara Divisions, was to lay up difficulties for the future government of 'Iraq, for which we were trustees. The policy adopted, with a large measure of success, was to appoint the Shaikh of each tribe to be the *Mudir* or representative of Government in his area. Every effort was made to concentrate the power in each tribe in the hands of one man—a leading Shaikh, selected, as a rule, from amongst numerous pretenders. Only in the town of Nasiriya itself was it necessary, for military reasons, to maintain direct administration by a Military Governor (Captain W. T. Fletcher). The success of the system depended entirely on the skill and wisdom shown by the Political Officer in choosing the right man, and in investing him with the requisite degree of authority. In this task Captain H. R. P. Dickson, who was appointed to the Division in 1916, showed consummate ability: a fluent Arabic scholar, endowed with very exceptional gifts of sympathy and insight into the psychology of Arabs, he succeeded, where perhaps no other member of the civil administration would have succeeded, in bringing the Division under some measure of control.

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[1] The word means, in Arabic, 'confederated', as opposed to 'Mutafarriq', or separated, and was first introduced by the Sʿadun conquerors to symbolize their success in bringing under one control a congeries of disunited tribes.

The Shaikhs, once selected, soon appreciated the value of an official position; they attached a value to the salary, usually of £15 a month, that went with the title of *Mudir*, out of all proportion to its monetary worth, and were willing to obey any order sooner than risk losing it; not only their personal pride but their family honour was at stake, considerations dearer to them than life itself. Their duties were to collect revenue, to maintain order, to settle minor disputes, and such larger ones as might be referred to them, either individually or collectively with other *Mudirs*, and to provide tribal labour for public works, such as the clearance of canals or the construction of roads.

The system required the most careful handling and constant vigilance. Some Shaikhs showed a tendency to abuse their powers, and to use their influence to prosecute ancient family quarrels or to amass wealth; others failed to exercise sufficient authority over their people, bringing upon themselves, and upon the unfortunate political officer to whom they were responsible, the wrath of the military authority and the protests of their more forceful colleagues. Complaints were at first constantly made against all alike by individual chiefs, who fancied themselves aggrieved, and by the *mukhtars* or *Rais-al-Hamula*, formerly appointed by government to assist the *Mudirs*. To some complaints it was necessary to turn a deaf ear; others called for a sympathetic hearing. It was a task that demanded inexhaustible patience and exceptional political insight. Nowhere in Mesopotamia were these qualities displayed in a higher degree than in the sweltering marshes of the Euphrates by Captain Dickson and his assistants. They had at their disposal none of the funds placed by the Treasury at the disposal of General Allenby, for disbursement to the Arabs on his right flank; they were deprived of the prestige derived from an active share in military operations, though they risked their lives almost daily in their wanderings amongst men to whom Europeans were still anathema, and the idea of orderly government an offence. Like the men of Besor, 'they tarried by the stuff', but there was no David to see that they were treated like those 'who went down unto the battle'. At the end of the War, the majority of these officials were deprived of their war gratuity, on the purely technical ground that they were not paid from Army funds, their salaries being debited as a matter of convenience to the revenues of the Occupied Territory. It was a flagrantly unjust decision, based upon a narrow interpretation of an Act of Parliament, and it still rankles in my mind.

The foregoing brief summary of the preoccupation of the civil administration of the Basra wilayat gives but an inadequate idea of the initiative and skill of the district officers on whose shoulders executive responsibility rested during 1917. Of developments during the following years, I shall have something to say hereafter; it is sufficient here to record that they followed, generally speaking, the lines already laid down—lines which the Arab Government, when it was installed in power, found themselves able to follow with little alteration. Basra remained the headquarters of the wilayat, and subject to the general control of Sir Percy Cox I remained there in administrative charge until the autumn, when I was transferred to Baghdad as Deputy Civil Commissioner.

I made, however, one trip to South-west Persia, at the urgent request of the military authorities, to investigate the possibility of establishing a convalescent camp in the Persian hills. The sight of the snow-clad Pusht-i-Kuh mountains on which, from the torrid banks of the Tigris, our men had cast longing eyes since 1915, inevitably suggested the idea of pleasant hill-stations, such as those which overlook the sweltering plains of the Punjab. Pusht-i-Kuh, however, was out of the question, both on political grounds and because no spot could be found within a reasonable distance, sufficiently lofty and with an adequate supply of water. It was decided, after consultation with Captain Noel, to investigate the potentialities of the Mungasht Mountains, which rise to a height of some 10,000 feet south-east of the Malamir plain. Accompanied by Captain Noel and my Personal Assistant, E. A. W. Hawke, who, though fresh from Dulwich via France, was one of the most promising juniors of the administration,[1] I rode from Ahwaz to Ram Hormuz and thence, via Maidaud, to the foot of the Mungasht, where a five-thousand foot climb began, amongst magnificent scenery, to the summit, a cup-shaped depression within which was as fine a landing-ground for aeroplanes as could be desired. But water there was none, except from patches of snow in the gullies, and fuel was very scarce. We accepted the hospitality of some Bahmai shepherds, and descended steeply through a series of romantic gorges to Qala' Tul. We set out next day to the oil-fields, over the Murdafil ridge, past Qala' Madrasa and along the salt stream at the foot of the Asmari to Gurgir. The heat was terrific, and it began to affect Hawke: he soaked his clothes in the shallow stream in the hope of cooling himself, but with little avail, and we had to shelter till the evening, waterless, under a rock in a ravine down which the wind blew lightly. We travelled nearly all night and reached the oil-fields of Masjid Sulaiman next day. It was hotter than ever; at night not a breath of wind stirred till midnight, when a sudden tornado of hot dry wind like the breath of a furnace came up from the plains of 'Arabistan. I sat upon my pallet and soaked my shirt and the sheet in water, and bade Hawke do likewise, but ten minutes later the sheet was bone-dry again. The hills around, lit up by the lurid light of burning gas-flares, echoed faintly to the steady rumblings of the rotary drills and the rhythmical thumps of the percussion outfits. In the distance I could see the lights of cars going from one rig to another, for the staff were working in relays round the clock, seven days a week, at a task as vital as that of any military department in Mesopotamia. In 1917 not only did the Eastern Naval Force and many of the Indian railways largely rely on Persian oil, but the communications of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force now depended exclusively on supplies of fuel oil, kerosene, and petrol from this source.

In a later volume I shall attempt to outline, however briefly, some aspects of the activities of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co., Ltd., and of their staff during the War; I will therefore not refer in greater detail here to the subject, which indeed merits a book to itself. After a few hours' conversation with my host, Mr. C. E. Capito, the Fields Manager, and with Dr. M. Y. Young, the Company's chief medical officer and political adviser, on whose counsel and personal influence both Sir Percy Cox and I relied throughout the War in all matters affecting the Bakhtiari, I rode down the pipe-line to Darra Khazina, and took ship to Ahwaz. Having paid my respects to the Shaikh of Mohammerah who was also Acting Governor-General, I had business to transact with the Vice-Consul, Captain Noel, and his Deputy, Captain E. G. B. Peel, of the Indian Police Department, and with General L. N. Younghusband, who commanded the troops in this area.

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[1] He was killed, poor lad, in a motor accident in London on 27th Dec. 1918, when on the point of returning to Mesopotamia.

Next morning we set out by car up the right bank of the Diz River to Dizful, where we had been compelled, in the interests alike of the peace of South-west Persia and the safety of our communications on the Tigris, to assume for the period of the War certain political responsibilities. Before the occupation of ʿAmara, Dizful, and the neighbouring town of Shushtar, thirty miles distant, had been centres of militant activity on the part of German and Turkish agents. Cut off from Persia, at that period, by the ranges of the Zagros, impassable in winter and occupied by rebellious tribes all the year round, the Persian Government was not then in a position to exercise any sort of authority. It was essential to maintain some sort of order there, and as soon as the Turks had been ejected from ʿArabistan and the pipe-line repaired a British Vice-Consul was appointed. The first incumbent was E. B. Soane, to whose work at Dizful I have referred elsewhere. It was in his time that the Sasanian bridge at Dizful was, to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants, repaired partly by public subscription, partly from local revenues, and in part by a subsidy from military funds. It was important for us to be able, should need arise, to move troops across the bridge from Shush, where a small detachment of cavalry was stationed in the Château de Suse, a grandiose replica of a fourteenth-century French *fortalice* built by the late M. Jacques de Morgan on the summit of the great mound which adjoins the site of 'Shushan the palace'. The two central spans had gone, and were replaced by a suspension-bridge, erected from such material as was available in the Military Field Park at Basra; that it still stands, fifteen years later, is a tribute to the skill of E. J. Wheldon, the engineer who built it, and to the conscientious work done under his supervision by Dizfuli masons in strengthening the foundations of the remaining arches, some of which were mere shells, hollowed out by the spring floods of almost two millenniums.

There are few more picturesque towns than Dizful, perched high along the left bank of the river on a precipitous cliff of conglomerate, honeycombed with deep underground cellars, in which the inhabitants take refuge from the torrid heats of summer. In the river-bed, nearly a hundred feet below, are a score of flour-mills, which are covered a fathom or more deep when the stream comes down in spate. To the north-west and north through haze and dust can be discerned the dim peaks of the Kabir Kuh and the first ramparts of the great range, which I had traversed and partly mapped in 1911 and 1912.

We were met on the road by Captain F. S. Greenhouse, who in the absence of Edmonds at Khurramabad was Acting Vice-Consul; he was installed in a house, owned by Majd-ul-Islam, which had served as a Consular rest-house ever since 1907, when Dizful was visited by the first British Vice-Consul at Ahwaz, Captain D. L. R. Lorimer.

Greenhouse had not Soane's peculiar gifts, but he possessed qualities at least equally valuable. He spoke the language well; he had exceptional charm of manner; he was much liked and greatly respected, but he was also feared by some, who realized that there was another side to his character and that those who sought to disturb the peace would, as the Aghawat of Shushtar later learned, have a short rope and a long drop. Edmonds, who later on nearly died of typhoid at Ahwaz, had gone up-country via Khurramabad on his way to Tehran in the hope of being able to make permanent arrangements with the tribes for the safety of the caravan route. The importance of the scheme to our forces in Mesopotamia and North-West Persia justified considerable expenditure. It would short-circuit the old Basra route to Hamadan and beyond via Baghdad, Khanaqin, and Kirmansha. It would relieve this route to the extent of several hundred tons a month, and by making the export of goods and the import of cereals by private agency possible would do much to alleviate famine conditions in Central Persia. The scheme proposed failed, owing to tribal avarice and the absence of any sort of effective intervention by the Persian Government, and it was not until 1929 that the route was again employed for commercial purposes. Mr. Edmonds has written[1] a most entertaining and very instructive account of Luristan, including some reference to this episode, in vol. lix of the *Geographical Journal* (1922), which I heartily commend to my readers.

After a day at Dizful, Hawke and I returned to Ahwaz via Shushtar. In earlier days I had more than once performed this journey of 100 miles with relays of horses in a single day: on this occasion it was no longer necessary thus to tax human and equine endurance. The ubiquitous motor had made its appearance, and after a thirty-five-mile ride to Shushtar we were able to do the rest of the journey by car, crossing the Karun at Band-i-Qir by a swing-bridge which the military authorities had installed, to the great satisfaction of Shushtar merchants.

A quick trip by car to Mohammerah, where I met Mr. C. A. Walpole, the General Manager, and his Deputy, Mr. T. L. Jacks,[2] concluded the trip, and after a night spent in the Consulate under the hospitable roof of Dr. and Mrs. Lincoln I returned to the harness of routine at Basra.

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[1] For other publications by him, see Wilson, *Bibliography of Persia*, 1930. He is now (1930) Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, Baghdad.

[2] Later Resident Director in Persia of Anglo-Persian Oil Co., Ltd.

My first duty on my return to Basra was to receive with proper ceremony a Japanese Mission, comprising both Military and Commercial Attachés. They were introduced to the leading Arabs of Basra, and before proceeding up-country were given an official luncheon at Zubair by the ever genial Shaikh Ibrahim. The trade of Japan with Mesopotamia during 1917 and 1918 was very large. Japanese manufacturers had for a time a virtual monopoly of trade in many lines, including 'Asahi' beer, but they notably failed to retain the market once shipping facilities from Europe to the Persian Gulf were again available.

Awaiting solution, too, were some awkward commercial questions arising out of the requisitioning by the Department of Local Resources of products belonging to French protégés on which certain French firms in Marseilles had a legal lien, and which were, it was alleged, required for the purpose of French military contracts. Our legal rights under Military Law were by no means clear, and the French Consul at Basra, Monsieur Roux, was well aware of the fact. He felt, not without reason, that he had been treated by the military authorities with less than the consideration to which he was entitled, and was in consequence inclined to make difficulties. A friendly solution was eventually reached, but not without reference to Paris and London.

A few days later, Sir Percy Cox summoned me to Baghdad, directing me to make an official inspection, on the way thither, of as many offices as possible. I set off a day or two later with Hawke, in a rickety launch, spending a night and part of a day in succession at Qurna, Qilat Salih, ʿAmara, ʿAli Gharbi, Kut-al-Amara, Baghaila, and ʿAziziya, learning at first hand from the mouth of each officer, and by numerous interviews with local magnates, something of the bewildering variety of local problems inseparable from the change of régime which we were inaugurating. I have already, in Chapter XV, outlined the general situation in the Baghdad wilayat. It was notably less satisfactory than in the Basra wilayat; prices were higher, and 'Arab incidents' were frequent even around ʿAziziya. But peace was in the air, and the notables whom I interviewed could only deplore the wickedness of the times, and urge us to lose no time in occupying Hilla and Diwaniya, where open anarchy reigned, and whence enemy agents, well supplied with cash, were openly offering to subsidize any person or tribe who would attack our communications.

When I reached Baghdad Sir Percy Cox informed me that he wished me to join him at head-quarters, and to assume charge as his Deputy in Mesopotamia, instead of in the Basra wilayat only. I pressed strongly upon him the desirability of bringing in fresh blood at the top of affairs, and asked him to endeavour to secure the services of Brig.-Gen. Clayton as his Deputy before deciding on my transfer. He did so, but with negative results, General Allenby replying that Clayton felt himself physically unfit for the post. No one else being suggested, I returned to Basra, where I handed over to my successor, Evelyn Howell of the Indian Political Department, and left in September for Baghdad. I was for many reasons sorry to leave Basra: my relations with the principal Arab residents were of the friendliest—ʿAbdul Latif and ʿAbdul Wahab Mandil, Ahmad Pasha as Sanaʿ,[1] Saiyid Hashim al Naqib, Mustafa Pasha al Chalabi, the Naʿama and the Bashʿayan families, and many others had been kindness itself to me; they had accepted cheerfully the innumerable petty but irritating inconveniences inseparable from the military occupation. Always courteous and hospitable, ready to assist whenever required, they were slow to protest, unless absolutely necessary, at the almost daily destruction of some treasured garden or house at the stern dictates of military exigency. I felt that it would be possible, in Basra at all events, very shortly after the end of hostilities to place on their shoulders responsibility for executive work in the civil administration, and endeavoured, indeed, to induce some of them to make a beginning in 1917, but was met by a polite refusal. They did not question our *bona fides*, nor did they doubt that we should retain control of the country, but they held, very naturally, that they should not be asked to commit themselves till the issue of the war was no longer in doubt. Little did we, or they, think that as late as October, 1920, we should still be awaiting the conclusion of peace with Turkey, and that the ultimate future of the country should still, in 1930, be involved in the obscurities of diplomatic documents.

Mr. E. B. Howell, of the Indian Political Department (later Foreign Secretary to the Government of India), was in September appointed Deputy Civil Commissioner in the Basra wilayat, and held that post until, early in 1919, it was decided mainly on 'political' grounds to abolish the wilayat as an administrative unit and reorganize the Civil Administration into nine Divisions or Liwas directly responsible to Head-quarters at Baghdad, a system which with few modifications was adopted in 1921 by the Arab Government. He was one of the ablest of the senior members of the administration, with a distinguished record of service in India and later at Muscat. His wide experience, coupled with much personal charm, were of great value, and he had much influence with the leading tribal chiefs and townsmen with whom he came in contact.

He prefaced his Review[2] for the year 1917 with a statement of the general tendencies apparent in the Basra wilayat, and the principles by

[1] He died aged 85 in May 1930.

[2] See Howell, E. B.

which the administration should be guided, which are not without interest twelve years later.

> 'The tribal population', he wrote, 'instead of remaining *in statu* and making a mosaic of the map, is beginning to sort and clarify itself and will in time settle down to much more well defined spheres of occupation than existed before we came. Everywhere the same process is at work and scattered sections are drawing together under the encouragement of a rule which sees in tribal consolidation the best present safeguard for nascent liberties.
>
> 'Beneficial the change may be; but do those affected like it? Recent suggestions with regard to possible terms of peace invest this question with added importance. But it has only to be propounded, for the impossibility of finding any single answer to be apparent. The towns, we may suppose, are in the main for us, and of the tribes, on a broad view, we may say that the great man is still sufficiently sensible of the advantage of dealing with a power whose representatives "play the game", to be, on the whole, content to put up with drawbacks already apparent. The small man, more easily scared, less articulate, more prone to wild veerings of opinion, would, mainly for material reasons perhaps, be more emphatic in approval. So far then, all is well; but confidence is a delicate plant and needs careful nurture. Its continued welfare seems chiefly to depend:
>
> 1. on the strict avoidance of all suspicion of sectarian partiality;
> 2. on the maintenance of the British reputation for justice;
> 3. on the exclusion from our system of an excessive rigidity;
> 4. on the widest possible diffusion of material prosperity, by every means in our power;
> 5. on the open avowal and pursuit of a liberal and progressive policy, including ample provision of good education and the employment under our administration of natives of 'Iraq, according to the most generous estimate of the measure of their abilities;
> 6. on keeping open for the ruled the door of personal access to their rulers.'

After making various suggestions for the regularization of the administrative and judicial system, then in process of clarification, he concluded:

> 'It is easier to put these questions than to answer them. For my own part I can find no sovereign remedy. I would only suggest that for the present we go on as we are, hastening very slowly if hastening at all, and making very sure that whatever of indigenous institutions we discard is really rotten before we part with it.'

These wise words represent very fairly the principles by which the civil administration was guided in the initial stages of its development.

By the end of the year we had already learned enough to enable us to realize that we were not imposing order on what was once orderless, nor were we introducing complication into a simple system: on the contrary, the heterogeneous system which we found was far more elaborate than any we had in mind. Our task was to adapt existing institutions to new needs, to attach to ourselves, for the time being,

Lieut.-Col. E. B. HOWELL
C.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S.
Indian Political Dept.

such old loyalties as existed amongst the population, on the lines indicated by Mr. Howell. There could be no loyalty as yet to 'the State': the Arab inhabitants were asked to transfer their allegiance for the time being to the civil administration because it could protect them from present evils, and could offer them better prospects than they had known. The awe that the army inspired gave place to gratification at the prosperity that followed in its train. These sentiments were strengthened, in many cases, by feelings of warm personal friendship for individual political officers. Yet it was clear that these bonds would not long suffice to maintain political equilibrium. The material basis of life was changing swiftly—the character of social organization was being radically altered by the new forces which we were introducing, and by improved communications. The conflict of loyalties and obligations was developing apace, in what manner and with what results I hope to show in a further volume.

This conflict of loyalties was not confined to Mesopotamia, but covered the whole of the Arabian peninsula, every part of which was involved in what a German political officer referred to, in documents captured by us on the Euphrates, as 'the fine mesh of a network of skilfully drawn but ambiguous documents'.

The entry of Turkey into the war had made it necessary for the British Empire to join battle with the Turks from the outset on two fronts—the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. The operations in the Mediterranean theatre were an integral part of the general campaign in Europe. Lord Kitchener, fresh from Cairo, took steps (without reference to the Foreign or India Offices) to enter into relations with Sharif Husain of Mecca, from whom, early in 1915, Sir Henry MacMahon, the Acting High Commissioner, received a letter requesting that Great Britain would guarantee the independence of all Arab lands as the reward of a revolt against Turkey. His letter was opportune, for any fresh embarrassment to Turkey would have its effect upon the campaigns in Gallipoli and on the Tigris. His demands, however, were sweeping. He proposed that Britain should acknowledge Arab independence within an area bounded on the north by Latitude 37, from Mersina to Persia; on the west by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean; on the south and east by the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the frontier of Persia. To this letter a cautious reply was at first sent, to be reinforced in October 1915 by a further assurance that subject to certain exceptions, such as the districts of Mersina, of Alexandretta, and of that portion of Syria lying west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, which were not purely Arab, Great Britain pledged herself to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories enclosed by the boundaries which he had proposed. A second reservation limited the assurance to those parts of the Arab territories in which Great Britain was free to act without detriment to the interests of France. A final reservation was that the Turkish wilayats of Basra and Baghdad would probably be subjected to British control.[1]

Sharif Husain was generally though not completely satisfied with these stipulations, and in the spring of 1916 he decided to take action in expelling the Turk from Arab territories. On 6th May 1916 the Sykes-Picot agreement was concluded, in circumstances detailed in Chapter X.

In order to understand the necessity for it and for the concessions made to the French, account must be taken of the military situation on the Western front, which enabled the French to claim that all our available forces were required there and ought not to be employed on schemes of conquest from which the other Allies were deriving and would derive no advantage. This claim was very strongly pressed, and French acquiescence had to be bought.

Notes were simultaneously exchanged between Great Britain, France, and Russia, in which the spheres of influence of those countries were defined. Italian interests had already been recognized in April 1915. The Sharif was not informed of the full details of these understandings between the Great Powers until 1918, but was well aware of the existence of many difficult problems for settlement after the war.

The Arab Bureau. When during 1915 the Arab question first became prominent, Sir Henry MacMahon gathered round him a number of experts with knowledge of the Red Sea Littoral, Palestine, and Syria. In February 1916, Government formally constituted on this foundation the 'Arab Bureau', under the direction of the late Dr. D. G. Hogarth, who was at the time a Commander R.N.V.R. This office was charged, under the control of the High Commissioner, with the study and development of British policy in Arab affairs and the collection of information. In June 1916 Mr. (later Sir) Ronald J. Storrs came to Mesopotamia from Egypt for liaison purposes on behalf of the Arab Bureau. His arrival was opportune, and a serious effort was made on our part to explore the best means of co-ordinating the policy being pursued under orders from Cairo and Baghdad on the Western and Eastern sides of the Arabian continent. The difficulties were almost insuperable. Sir Henry MacMahon's letters had not taken into account the feelings of Arab leaders such as Ibn Saʿud,[2] who not only refused to recognize the right of Sharif Husain to speak or negotiate on behalf of the Arab people, but were actively hostile to his pretensions. This hostility was accentuated by the somewhat overbearing attitude adopted by Sharif Husain in correspondence, and by the jealousy with which the very large subsidies he received in the form of gold, arms, and munitions were regarded by Ibn Saʿud and others. We had already found that the Sharif Husain carried no weight in Mesopotamia: his pretensions were ridiculed, and his claims to speak on behalf alike of the Sunni and Shiʿah elements were vehemently denied. It was clear that, so far as Mesopotamia was concerned, we could gain no sort of advantage from the increasingly close relations that were being established with King Husain, and that it was necessary for the purposes of the military operations and occupation to pursue a policy with which the inhabitants were in sympathy, and if this ran on lines different from those followed elsewhere, the justification lay in the reservation already referred to above, namely, 'that the Turkish wilayats of Basra and Baghdad would probably be subjected to British control'. It was felt, however, that nothing but good could come of a personal visit by Mr. Storrs to Ibn Saʿud, and, undeterred by the extreme heat, he set out from Kuwait for Riyadh in July, but was soon compelled by sickness to return by sea to Palestine, where, in the following year, he arose to deserved fame as the first Governor of Jerusalem.

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[1] See MacMunn, pp. 215–17. *Official History of the Campaign in Palestine.*

[2] See H. St J. Philby, *Arabia* (*Modern World Series.*)

In November 1917 a fresh element of confusion was added to the diplomatic situation in Arabia. The development of the war, which was ever engaging more nations and affecting more interests, the imperative pressure of Allied needs, and the international status of the Jewish race, had made desirable the recognition by the Allies of Jewish aspirations for a 'National Home' in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration, a public statement by Mr. A. J. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Lord Rothschild, on the 9th November 1917, was as follows:

> 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

The announcement aroused no interest in Mesopotamia; nor did it leave a ripple on the surface of local political thought in Baghdad, where there had been for many centuries a large Jewish population whose relations with Arabs had caused them far less concern than the attitude of their Turkish rulers. I discussed the declaration at the time with several members of the Jewish community, with whom we were on friendly terms. They remarked that Palestine was a poor country, and Jerusalem a bad town to live in. Compared with Palestine, Mesopotamia was a Paradise. 'This is the Garden of Eden', said one; 'it is from this country that Adam was driven forth—give us a good Government and we will make this country flourish—for us Mesopotamia is a home, a national home to which the Jews of Bombay and Persia and Turkey will be glad to come. Here shall be liberty and with it opportunity! In Palestine there may be liberty, but there will be no opportunity.' Vain words, no doubt, but they concealed perhaps the seeds of economic truth. To the Jewish and to the Christian population of Arabia, as well as to Arabs, the policies of the Allies involved a sharp conflict of loyalties, the issue of which is still in doubt.

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APPENDIX I

1. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

TO THE ARAB RULERS AND SHAIKHS IN THE PERSIAN GULF AND THEIR SUBJECTS.

Since the Crimean War, when France and Great Britain voluntarily went to war to preserve the integrity of Turkey, it has been one of the supreme objects of the British Government to preserve inviolate the Ottoman Empire.

Now, by their own act in foolishly intervening in the struggle between Germany and all the other Powers, the present rulers of that Empire would appear to be wilfully preparing their own destruction, and it seems impossible to hope that their Empire can any longer be preserved. It, therefore, behoves the independent Shaikhs of Arabia to consider their attitude towards this oppressor of Muslims.

As to the attitude of the Shaikhs, who are near to Turkey and have seen and felt their oppression, there is no doubt whatever. They have long been in opposition to Turkey and have been endeavouring to obtain their freedom. Some have actually done so and the others are now in open rebellion against her.

The Rulers and the Shaikhs of the Persian Gulf know well that Great Britain has never interfered with the religious observances of the Muslims nor shown hostility to them, but has invariably laboured for the preservation of peace and good order and for friendly relations with all her neighbours. Times without number opportunities have presented themselves for the acquisition of fresh territory and any temptation of the kind has been resisted.

Your relations with Great Britain are of long standing and I take this opportunity of assuring you that, in this struggle, we shall do our utmost to preserve for you your liberty and religion. No act of ours shall threaten either of these, which are dearer to humanity than life itself. Unfortunately the arrogance and the folly of Turkey have involved the whole world in calamity and trouble. All that is required on your part is that you should preserve order and quiet in your territories and should not allow the foolish among your subjects to do anything to disturb the peace or to injure British interests.

With patience you will emerge unscathed from the troubles that now surround you and be stronger and freer than before. Do not allow foolish people to be led away by talk of 'Jihad'. This War has nothing to do with religion except that it is the interest of all religions to destroy the proud and overbearing and strengthen peaceable folk, who desire nothing but to preserve their independence.

(Sd.) S. G. KNOX, LIEUT.-COL.,
Offg. Political Resident in the Persian Gulf.

Dated the 31st October, 1914.

2. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

In view of the outbreak of war which has unfortunately broken out between the Government of Great Britain and the Ottoman Government, authority has been received by His Excellency the Viceroy from His Majesty's Government to issue this public announcement regarding the Holy Towns of Arabia, and also the Holy Places in ʿIraq, and the port of Jeddah, so that there may not arise in the minds of His Majesty the King's most loyal Muslim subjects any doubt or misunderstanding in regard to the attitude and policy of the British Government in this war, which does not concern religion in any way whatever.

There will be no attack on those towns or Holy Places or on Jeddah, either on the part of the British Army or Navy, so long as there is no interference with pilgrims and visitors from India to those towns and Holy Places.

In accordance with the desire of the British Government, the two Governments of France and Russia likewise have given similar assurances.

By order,
(Sd.) S. G. KNOX,
His Britannic Majesty's Political Resident
and Consul-General in the Persian Gulf.

Dated the 1st November, 1914.

3. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

War has broken out between Great Britain and Turkey, but it is notified for the public information of all the Muslims, that, so long as the Indian pilgrims proceeding to Mecca and Medina are not seriously interfered with, no hostile action will be taken by the British or Indian Government or by their ships or soldiers against the port of Jeddah or the Holy Places.

By order of the
British Government,
(Sd.) S. G. KNOX, Lieut.-Col.,
Offg. Political Resident in the Persian Gulf.

Dated the 1st November, 1914.

4. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

Let it not be hidden from you that the Great British Government has to its great regret been forced into a state of war by the persistent and unprovoked hostility of the Turkish Government instigated by Germany for her own ends. The British Government has, therefore, been obliged to send a force to the Shatt-el-ʿArab to protect her commerce and friends and expel the hostile Turkish troops. But let it be known to all, the British Government has no quarrel with the Arab inhabitants on the river bank; and so long as they show themselves friendly and do not harbour Turkish troops or go about armed they have nothing to fear and neither they nor their property will be molested.

They are clearly warned, however, that they must not carry arms; for it will not be possible to distinguish an armed man from an enemy, and thus any person going armed will be liable to be shot.

(Sd.) P. Z. COX,
Resident, Persian Gulf.

Dated the 5th November, 1914.

5. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE BRITISH FORCES IN OCCUPATION OF BASRA, TO THE NOTABLES AND PUBLIC OF THE TOWN.

Let it be known to all that from of old the British Government has had many millions of Muhammadan subjects, more than any other Power in the world more even than Turkey.

As is well known, Great Britain has in the past always displayed friendship and regard for Turkey; and a few months ago when war broke out between certain of the Powers of Europe, the British Government urged most strongly on the Sublime Porte that the Ottoman Government should on no account join in the conflict, as such a course was opposed to the best interests of Turkey. Furthermore, in this connection, Turkey was assured that so long as she refrained from participation in the war, the British Government and the Allies would guarantee the maintenance of her independence and integrity. Unfortunately, the Turkish Government did not accept or attend to the advice of the British Government in this regard, for the reason that she was misled and tricked by German intrigues to such an extent that she committed numerous acts of hostility which forced the British Government into a state of war with her.

The British Government has now occupied Basra, but though a state of war with the Ottoman Government still prevails, yet we have no enmity or ill-will against the populace, to whom we hope to prove good friends and protectors. No remnant of Turkish Administration now remains on this region. In place thereof the British flag has been established—under which you will enjoy the benefits of liberty and justice both in regard to your religious and your secular affairs.

I have given strict orders to my victorious troops that in the execution of the duties entrusted to them they are to deal with the populace generally with complete consideration and friendliness. It remains for you yourselves to treat them in the same way.

In conclusion you are at full liberty to pursue your vocations as usual, and your business as before, and it is my confident hope that the commerce of Basra will resume its course and prosper even more than in the past.

(Sd.) P. Z. COX, LIEUT.-COLONEL,
Political Officer to the Force.

Dated the 22nd November, 1914.

6. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

To All Whom it may Concern.

As is known to all, the territories of ʻIraq from Fao to Qurna have now been in the occupation of the British forces for two months past.

It has already been repeatedly explained to the public that the British Government were forced against their wishes into war with Turkey, by reason of the many hostile acts committed by the Turkish Government against her at the instigation of Germany. But the military operations of the British forces are directed solely against the Turkish Government and its troops. As regards the Arabs, the British Government has no desire to treat them as enemies so long as they themselves remain friendly and neutral and refrain from taking up arms against her troops. On the contrary, the wish of the British Government is to free the Arabs from the oppression of the Turks and bring them advancement and increase of prosperity and trade.

During the past two months many of the Shaikhs of the Arab communities and tribes in the Basra Wilayat, realising their own interests, have intimated their submission to the British authorities, or have, of their own accord, stood aloof from the hostilities between the Governments. Some misguided individuals have, however, been induced by the enemy to take up arms and assist them against the British troops.

This notice is issued in order to warn all the Shaikhs and tribes of the Basra Wilayat, including the districts of Basra, Qurna, ʻAmara and Muntafiq, that in the case of those departing from the path of friendship and neutrality and taking up arms in co-operation with the enemy, their properties lying within the sphere of British control will be considered sequestrated to the British Government.

Due warning will be given when such sequestration is to be carried into effect.

This is what had to be explained.

By Order of the General Officer Commanding,
(Sd.) P. Z. COX, Lieut.-Colonel,
Chief Political Officer, I.E.F. 'D'.

Dated the 20th Rabi-ul-Awwal, 1333 (14th February, 1915).

7. PROCLAMATION (Translation)

To the Shaikhs and Tribesmen of the Kʻab.

As is known to all, the Kʻab are subjects of the Government of Persia.

Now the Persian Government is on terms of cordial friendship with the Government of Great Britain, and with reference to the war which is now in progress between Great Britain and Germany and Turkey, the Persian Government has repeatedly proclaimed her strict neutrality and is enjoining it on her subjects and maintaining it herself.

Notwithstanding this, it has become apparent that some of the tribesmen of ʻArabistan, misled by the intrigues of the Turks and interested people, are showing signs of departing from the path of neutrality and are attempting to assist the enemies of Great Britain. Turkey has simply been dragged in by the intrigues of Germany to help her in her difficulties. In any case, the war is between the Governments, and the Arabs have nothing to do with it. Nor does the British Government wish to fight against the Arabs. On the contrary, she is a just Government and her desire is to befriend the Arabs and increase their prosperity and help them in their difficulties when they become known to her; and as regards their religion the British Government has no design at all against Islam or Muslims, on the contrary, she has millions of Muslim subjects. But be not deceived; if you, the K'ab, are so misguided as to leave your villages and join the enemies of the British Government in spite of the neutrality of Persia, then the British Government will be driven to treat hostility with hostility and their arm is long and quick. So take this friendly warning and do not put yourselves in trouble for nothing.

(Sd.) P. Z. COX.
Chief Political Officer, I.E.F. 'D'.

Dated the 15th March, 1915.

APPENDIX II

TREATY BETWEEN THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND ʿABDUL ʿAZIZ BIN ʿABDUR RAHMAN BIN FAISAL AL-SAʿUD, RULER OF NAJD, EL HASA, QATIF, ETC., DATED THE 26TH DECEMBER, 1915

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate.

Preamble

The High British Government on its own part, and ʿAbdul ʿAziz bin ʿAbdur Rahman bin Faisal Al-Saʿud, Ruler of Najd, El Hasa, Qatif and Jubail, and the towns and ports belonging to them, on behalf of himself, his heirs and successors, and tribesmen, being desirous of confirming and strengthening the friendly relations which have for a long time existed between the two parties, and with a view to consolidating their respective interests—the British Government have named and appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Percy Cox, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., British Resident in the Persian Gulf, as their Plenipotentiary, to conclude a treaty for this purpose with ʿAbdul ʿAziz bin ʿAbdur Rahman bin Faisal Al-Saʿud.

The said Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Percy Cox and ʿAbdul ʿAziz bin ʿAbdur Rahman bin Faisal Al-Saʿud, hereafter known as 'Bin Saʿud' have agreed upon and concluded the following articles:

I

The British Government do acknowledge and admit that Najd, El Hasa, Qatif and Jubail, and their dependencies and territories, which will be discussed and determined hereafter, and their ports on the shores of the Persian Gulf, are the countries of Bin Saʿud and of his fathers before him, and do hereby recognise the said Bin Saʿud as the Independent Ruler thereof and absolute Chief of their tribes, and after him his sons and descendants by inheritance; but the selection of the individual shall be in accordance with the nomination (i.e. by the living Ruler) of his successor; but with the proviso that he shall not be a person antagonistic to the British Government in any respect; such as, for example, in regard to the terms mentioned in this Treaty.

II

In the event of aggression by any Foreign Power on the territories of the countries of the said Bin Saʿud and his descendants without reference to the British Government and without giving her an opportunity of communicating with Bin Saʿud and composing the matter, the British Government will aid Bin Saʿud to such extent and in such a manner as the British Government after consulting Bin Saʿud may consider most effective for protecting his interests and countries.

III

Bin Saʿud hereby agrees and promises to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement, or treaty, with any Foreign Nation or Power, and further to give immediate notice to the Political authorities of the British Government of any attempt on the part of any other Power to interfere with the above territories.

IV

Bin Sa'ud hereby undertakes that he will absolutely not cede, sell, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of the above territories or any part of them, or grant concessions within those territories to any Foreign Power, or to the subjects of any Foreign Power, without the consent of the British Government.

And that he will follow her advice unreservedly provided that it be not damaging to his own interests.

V

Bin Sa'ud hereby undertakes to keep open within his territories the roads leading to the Holy Places, and to protect pilgrims on their passage to and from the Holy Places.

VI

Bin Sa'ud undertakes, as his fathers did before him, to refrain from all aggression on, or interference with, the territories of Kuwait, Bahrain, and of the Shaikhs of Qatar and the Oman Coast, who are under the protection of the British Government, and who have treaty relations with the said Government; and the limits of their territories shall be hereafter determined.

VII

The British Government and Bin Sa'ud agree to conclude a further detailed treaty in regard to matters concerning the two parties.

Dated 18th Safar 1334 corresponding to 26th December 1915.

(Signed and Sealed)

'ABDUL 'AZIZ AL-SA'UD.

P. Z. COX, Lieut.-Col.,
British Resident in the Persian Gulf.

CHELMSFORD,
Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

This treaty was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council at Simla on the 18th day of July A.D. one thousand nine hundred and sixteen.

A. H. GRANT,
Secretary to the Government of India,
Foreign and Political Department.

APPENDIX III

THE OFFICIAL NAMES OF THE BATTLES AND OTHER ENGAGEMENTS FOUGHT BY THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE DURING THE GREAT WAR, 1914–1919.

Extract from Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee as approved by The Army Council (*Cmd.* 1138. 1922).

MESOPOTAMIA

I. THE CAMPAIGN IN LOWER MESOPOTAMIA

Operations.	*Name of Battles and Tactical Incidents Included*	*Actions, &c.*	*Miscellaneous Incidents.*	*Limits.*	
				Chronological	*Geographical.*
Basra Operations . . (6th November, 1914–14th April, 1915).	… …	…	Landing at Fao	6th November	Delta of the Shatt al 'Arab up to Basra.
		Affair of Saihan	…	15th November	
		Affair of Sahil	…	17th November	
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Basra	22nd November	
		First Action of Qurna	…	4th–8th December	The Tigris above Basra.
		Affair of Ahwaz	…	3rd March	North-west of Ahwaz (*exclusive*).
		Affair of Shaiba	…	3rd March	West of Shaiba (*exclusive*).
	BATTLE OF SHAIBA	…	…	12th–14th April	The inundation west of Basra and to the west of it.
Advance up the Tigris, 1915 (31st May–5th October)	… …	Second Action of Qurna	…	31st May	The Tigris above Qurna.
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Amara	3rd June	
	BATTLE OF KUT, 1915	…	…	28th September	The Tigris above Sannaiyat.
—*with subsidiary Operations on the Karkha River* . . . (*7th May–3rd June*)	… …	Affair of Khafajiya	…	14th–16th May	
Advance up the Euphrates, 1915 (27th June–25th July)	… …	Actions for Nasiriya	…	5th, 13th–14th, and 24th July	The Euphrates west of Hor al Hammar.

II. THE FIRST CAMPAIGN FOR BAGHDAD

Advance on Baghdad, 1915 (11th November–6th December, 1915)	BATTLE OF CTESIPHON	...	...	22nd–24th November	The Tigris above Lajj.
		Affair of Umm al Tubul	...	1st December	The Tigris above Kut.
	—*with subsequent* DEFENCE OF KUT The Christmas Eve Attack	...	...	7th December 1915–28th April 1916	
Attempts to relieve Kut . (4th January–24th April 1916)	... ...	...	...	4th January–24th April	
First Attempt . . (*4th–23rd January*)	... ...	Action of Shaikh Sa‘ad	...	6th–8th January	The Tigris above ‘Ali Gharbi.
		Action of the Wadi	...	13th–14th January	The Tigris above Shaikh Sa‘ad.
		First Attack on Hanna	...	21st January	The Tigris above the Wadi.
Second Attempt . . (*7th–10th March*)	... ...	Attack on the Dujaila Redoubt	...	8th March	The Tigris above the Wadi.
Third Attempt . . (*1st 24th April*)	... ...	Action of Fallahiya *—including Capture of Hanna*	...	5th April	The Tigris above the Wadi.
		First Attack on Sannaiyat	...	6th April	
		Second Attack on Sannaiyat	...	9th April	
		Action of Bait Aissa	...	17th–18th April	
		Third Attack on Sannaiyat	...	22nd April	
			Capitulation of Kut	29th April	
Euphrates Operations, 1916 (January–September)	... ...	Affair of Butaniya	...	14th January	North of Nasiriya.
		Action of As Sahilan	...	11th September	

III. THE CAPTURE AND CONSOLIDATION OF BAGHDAD

Operations.	*Name of Battles and Tactical Incidents Included.*	*Actions, &c.*	*Miscellaneous Incidents.*	*Limits.*	
				Chronological.	*Geographical.*
Operations for the Capture of Kut, 1917. (13th December 1916–25th February 1917)	BATTLE OF KUT, 1917	...	...	9th January–24th February	The Tigris above Shaikh Sa'ad.
	Capture of the Khadairi Bend	...	..	9th–19th January	
	Capture of the Hai Salient	...	...	25th January–5th February	
	Capture of the Dahra Bend	...	...	9th–16th February	
	Capture of Sannaiyat	...	...	17th–24th February	
	Passage at the Shumran Bend	...	...	23rd–24th February	
—*with subsequent Pursuit to Baghdad* (*25th February–10th March* 1917)	... ...	Passage of the Diyala	...	7th–10th March	The Tigris above Kut.
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Baghdad	11th March	
Operations for the consolidation of the position at Baghdad (14th March–30th April 1917)	... ...	Action of Mushaidiya	...	14th March	The Tigris above Kadhimain.
		First Action of the Jabal Hamrin	...	25th March	Near Shahraban.
		Affair of Dali 'Abbas	...	27th–28th March	Right bank of the River Diyala above Baquba.
		Affair of Dogame	...	29th March	The Tigris above Mushaidiya.
		Affairs on the Nahr Khalis	...	9th–15th April	The Nahr Khalis Canal above Daltawa.
		Passage of the 'Adhaim	...	18th April	The Tigris above Dogama.
		Action of Istabulat	...	21st–22nd April	The Tigris above the Shatt al 'Adhaim.
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Samarra	23rd–24th April	
		Affairs on the Shatt al 'Adhaim	...	30th April	The Shatt al 'Adhaim above its junction with

IV. THE CAMPAIGN IN UPPER MESOPOTAMIA

Euphrates Operations, 1917–18. (8th July–13th April)	... ...	Attack on Ramadi	...	11th–14th July	The Euphrates above Dhibban.
		Capture of Ramadi	...	28th–29th September	
		Action of Khan Baghdadi	...	26th–27th March	The Euphrates above Hit.
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Ana	28th March	
			Blockade of Najaf	1st–13th April	
Tigris Operations, 1917 . (1st October–6th December)	... ...	Second Action of the Jabal Hamrin	...	18th–20th October	North of Shahraban.
		Actions for Tikrit	...	24th October, 2nd and 5th November	The Tigris above Al Ajik.
		Third Action of the Jabal Hamrin	...	3rd–6th December	North of Shahraban.
Kirkuk Operations . . . (25th April–24th May 1918)	... ...	Action of Tuz Khurmatli	...	29th April	North of Kifri.
Advance on Mosul . (23rd October–5th November 1918)	... ...	Action of Fatha Gorge	...	23rd–24th October	The Tigris above Tikrit.
		Actions on the Lesser Zab	...	25th October	The Tigris above Fatha Gorge.
	BATTLE OF SHARQAT	...	...	28th–30th October	
		Affair of Qaiyara	...	30th October	
			—*with subsequent* Occupation of Mosul	3rd November	

V. NORTH-WEST PERSIA AND THE CASPIAN, 1918

Operations.	*Name of Battles and Tactical Incidents Included.*	*Actions, &c.*	*Miscellaneous Incidents.*	*Limits.*	
				Chronological.	*Geographical.*
Establishment of line of communication between Baghdad and the Caspian (27th January–29th July)	... ...	Affair near Zuhab	...	25th April	
		Defence of Resht	...	20th July	
Caspian Operations . . (August–September)	... ...	...	Occupation of Baku	4th August	
			Occupation of Krasnovodsk	27th August	
		Defence of Baku	...	26th August–15th September	
Azerbaijan Operations . (September)	... ...	Rearguard Actions from Mianeh	...	5th–14th September	North-west of Nikpai.

NOTE by the author of this work. 'Battle Honours' were granted as follows for service in Mesopotamia during the Great War:

Mesopotamia.	With appropriate year dates according to service.
Basra.	(For Saihan or Sahil.)
Shaiba.	(For the battle of 12th–14th April 1915.)
Kut 1915.	
Ctesiphon.	
Defence of Kut.	
Tigris 1916.	(For any of the engagements recorded under 'Attempts to relieve Kut' in the Battles Nomenclature Committee's report quoted above).
Kut 1917	
Baghdad.	(For the 'Pursuit of Baghdad', 25th February–10th March 1917).
Khan Baghdadi.	
Sharqat.	

No clasps were issued with the 1914–15 Star, British War Medal, or Victory Medal for service during the Great War. The General Service Medal with clasp 'Iraq' was issued for military operations in that country between 10th December 1919, and 17th November 1920, under the conditions published in Army Order 4 of 1923.

No medal was awarded by the Turkish Government for the campaign in Mesopotamia.

APPENDIX IV

NOTE ON ISSUES OF POSTAGE STAMPS IN MESOPOTAMIA DURING THE WAR

BY MAJ.-GEN. SIR PERCY COX

As in the case of other expeditionary forces equipped and controlled by the Government of India, their Expeditionary Force 'D' was supplied from the beginning with British Indian stamps (the King George issue of 1911), overprinted with the initials 'I.E.F.', but the Chief Political Officer was keenly alive to the pleasure of annoying the enemy by overprinting his stamps, and lost no time, on the entry of our troops into any new town, in having a thorough search made of the post and telegraph offices, firstly for information in the form of odd letters or telegram drafts, and secondly for supplies of postage stamps.

But in this connexion if in few others, the efforts of the Turkish civil authorities, completed no doubt by the enterprise of local residents, were extraordinarily effective, and they succeeded in making a clearance of all postage stamps before their retreat up-river. Thus it was that in the course of our advance up the Tigris and capture in turn of Basra, Qurna, Qil'at Salih, and 'Amara no stamps whatever were obtained. The first occasion on which a small supply promised to fall into our hands happened in a very different way. Stamps to the value of about 2,000 rupees were found, with other stolen property, in possession of an inhabitant of Kut-el-Amara who was under trial for murder, and while reporting the circumstances the Police Officer in charge of the case asked permission to retain the stamps, as an exhibit in the case, until the proceedings were over. Unfortunately the prisoner was still awaiting trial when the battle of Ctesiphon took place, followed by Townshend's retirement to Kut, and there the stamps remained and were presumably recovered by the Turks on the surrender of Kut. At any rate no more was heard of them.

It was not until we got to Baghdad that any considerable supply was secured, and then not from Baghdad itself. In this case, though the Turks failed not to make a clearance of the local post-offices, they had not the time to bring in the supplies remaining in the distant country post-offices, and steps were immediately taken to recover any stocks which had not been made away with by the local inhabitants before we had access to them. Apart from the specific recovery of small supplies in such cases the Chief Political Officer made it known that he was prepared to receive and pay for any Turkish stamps remaining with the inhabitants (they were, of course, of no use for postage in our Army offices), and by this means a small number was obtained. Meanwhile it was decided that the issue of an 'overprinted' series would not be justified unless the quantity issuable represented not less than £1,000 in value. By the end of August 1917 this figure was reached, and after settlement of the amount to be issued of each denomination they were handed over to the Superintendent of the Government Press to be overprinted with the words 'Baghdad in British Occupation'. The collection was composed of a curious mixture of old and recent issues, and it was decided that no variety of which less than sixty specimens were available should be utilized. In the result

14,580 stamps were issued, of a total value of about £1,038 and composed of twenty-five varieties of divers periods.

It is interesting to record here that a sufficient supply was obtained of the 200 piastre stamp of the 1913 issue, bearing the effigy of Sultan Mohammed V, to warrant its inclusion in the issue, but on reference to the Secretary of State we were informed that it was the wish of his Majesty King George that this stamp should not be overprinted.

It was, of course, recognized that such a comparatively small issue would in time become valuable; accordingly the most rigorous precautions were taken, firstly, to avoid detectable errors, and secondly, to ensure, so far as stocks permitted, that any member of the Force who wanted specimens could buy one set, and one only, over the counter at the post office.

In the course of collecting these stamps for issue it was noticed that the last Turkish issue, brought out in 1913, the pictorial 'Adrianople' issue, had been engraved by Messrs Bradbury and Wilkinson, a British firm, so it was easy to obtain a further supply for future requirements, and a consignment was accordingly ordered and brought into use in September 1918, with the more comprehensive overprint "'Iraq in British Occupation' instead of 'Baghdad in British Occupation'. These remained in use until 1923, when the newly-constituted State of 'Iraq issued a pictorial set of its own designed by Mrs. C. C. Garbett and Miss E. Cheesman.

The numbers and denominations of the overprinted Baghdad stamps were as in the following table. In one case where only 59 stamps are shown as having been issued, the 60th stamp was a palpable error, so had to be eliminated.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF TURKISH STAMPS OVERPRINTED 'BAGHDAD IN BRITISH OCCUPATION'

HANDED OVER BY CIVIL COMMISSIONER TO DIRECTOR OF POSTS, MESOPOTAMIA EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, FOR ISSUE FROM CIVIL POST OFFICES, BAGHDAD, FROM 1st SEPTEMBER 1917

Serial number.	*Denomination.*	*Number of each variety.*	*Total number of each denomination.*	*Total value.*		
				£	s.	d.
	2 ANNAS					
1.	*Stamps*	820				
2.	"	346				
3.	"	747				
4.	"	1,339				
5.	"	59				
6.	"	1,051				
7.	"	111				
8.	"	657	5,130	641	4	0
1.	*Envelopes*	337	337	42	2	0
	1 ANNA					
1.	*Stamps*	65				
2.	"	1,048				
3.	"	434				
4.	"	415				
5.	"	288				
6.	"	270				
7.	"	274				
8.	"	249				
9.	"	148	3,191	199	7	0
1.	*Envelopes*	70				
2.	"	57	127	7	15	0
	½ ANNA					
1.	*Stamps*	1,261				
2.	"	1,012				
3.	"	770				
4.	"	270				
5.	"	242				
6.	"	119	3,674	114	13	0
	¼ ANNA					
1.	*Stamps*	1,215				
2.	"	906	2,121	33	2	3
		GRAND TOTAL	14,580	1,038	3	3

P. Z. Cox
Civil Commissioner.

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